MYSTERY MAGAZINE

VOL. 1. No. 17.
JULY 15, 1918

TEN CENTS

AN EXCITING DETECTIVE STORY

THE CASE of CAPTAIN FORTESQUE

BY

REDFIELD INGALLS

A Detective Story, "THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX," by Edith Sessions Tupper, in Our Next

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. I JULY 15, 1918. No. 17

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Published Twice a Month by

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street, New York

N. Hastings Wolff, Pres.
E. Byrne, Treas.
Charles E. Nylander, Sec.

LU. SENARENS, Editor

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

Domestic, Single Copy	10 Cents
Domestic, Yearly	$2.50
Canada	$2.75
Foreign	$3.00

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THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE

A BAFFLING DETECTIVE MYSTERY

By REDFIELD INGALLS

CHAPTER ONE

A VOICE ON THE PHONE

IT had been a hard day at the office. The district attorney had run down to Palm Beach to shake off a persistent New York cold, and in consequence innumerable odds and ends of work had to be cleared away. Several important cases were up, and one of the newspapers was hammering the department. So it was nearly ten o'clock when Robert Stockton finally dismissed his chauffeur at the door of his comfortable bachelor suite in the West Eighties near Riverside Drive.

He shivered a little as he let himself in and shed his damp ulster and rubbers, warming his hands at the radiator. The time was late winter, and the tall young man took a moment to envy his chief the warmth and sunshine of Florida. Outside it was drizzling and slippery underfoot, with a penetrating cold due to the salt air that makes New York a good place to avoid at least part of the year.

Stockton was just about to take off coat and vest and get into a comfortable bathrobe, as preliminary to an hour with a pipe and book before he went to bed, when the telephone rang.

"Now, who the devil?" he muttered impatiently, sat down at the mahogany table and took up the receiver. "Hello?"

"Is this Mr. Stockton?" asked a woman's voice, sharp with anxiety and shaken with strong emotion. His eyebrows went up.

"Yes; what is it?"

"The assistant district attorney?" persisted the voice.

"Yes. Who is speaking, please?"

"Never mind that. Do you know the Junkin Hotel on West End avenue? It's just around the corner from your place."

"Why—yes, I think I do," replied the young man, his steel-gray eyes and firm mouth hardening. The tones of that voice meant only one thing—trouble.

"Well, will you *please*, Mr. Stockton, go over there and tell Captain Fortesque that his life is in the *greatest danger!*" cried the woman with a note almost of hysteria.

"What's that?" exclaimed Stockton, very much on the alert.

"Fortesque—the Junkin—he's in danger—I can't say any more——" Abruptly the connection was broken.

Stockton hung up the receiver and sat scowling at the telephone, pushing back the fair hair from his high and broad forehead in a characteristic gesture. He had been long enough in the district attorney's office of the greatest city in the world to know something of the annoying tricks that vindictive criminals are prone to play when they can on their "oppressers." At the same time he knew that warnings given to those Higher Up are not always to be ignored. Also he was young and enthusiastic, and still found romance in the detection and punishment of crime.

In short, he was in the position of a fire captain who suspects that the alarm just sounded is false, yet must answer it in case it isn't.

For a moment he sat drumming his fingers on the table, then snatched up the receiver again and jiggled the hook.

"Please trace that call," he ordered Central, and added something that ended in "Police business. Hurry!"

He had not long to wait. The call had come from a public telephone booth in the West Nineties; and when Stockton got the drug clerk in charge he was informed that the caller had been an agitated woman in a heavy veil, who had immediately hurried away.

"Would you know her again if you saw her?" he asked sharply.

"Why—I think so, sir," said the man.

"All right." Stockton rang off and got into his ulster and rubbers again. This *might* be a hoax, he thought, then shrugged his shoulders. The call might be genuine, and as serious as it sounded. He would investigate.

Outside the weather proved to be even worse than it had been a few minutes before, and he shivered as he buttoned his coat around him and turned up the collar. There had been rain the night before, followed by bitter cold all day. Now it was raining again in a heavy, freezing downpour, and the pavements and sidewalks were covered with treacherous glair ice.

After a few cautious steps to test the stability of the walking, Stockton hurried around the corner and into West End avenue. In less than a minute he had reached the Junkin.

It was a twelve-story apartment hotel, its entrance on a cross-street, but its side facing on the avenue. The lobby was quietly ornate, as the young attorney saw on entering. Two or three guests were sitting or walking about, and the night clerk was busy sorting over the late mail.

"Is Captain Fortesque in?" asked Stockton, going up to the desk and shaking the rain from the edge of his hat.

"Captain Josh? No, sir, not yet," replied the clerk, glancing at the clock. "He hasn't got back from the club yet. He'll be here at ten-thirty."

"What club?" asked Stockton.

"The Riverside Chess Club, sir."

"He's sure to be here?"

The clerk looked surprised. "Why, yes, sir. Captain Fortesque is as punctual as a watch."

Stockton also glanced at the clock and saw he had only a few minutes to wait. He found a seat that would not be injured by his wet ulster and settled himself.

Presently he became aware of a small man with heavy pouches under his eyes and an expressionless, somewhat wrinkled face, who was eyeing him with no great favor. The little man walked pompously about for a few moments, spoke with authority to the clerk, glanced at the clock with a scowl and went into one of the elevators. He was shot upstairs.

Stockton saw that it was within five minutes of the half-hour.

A guest or two came in, dripping and blowing with the wet and cold, and got their keys at the desk. There seemed to be some delay at the elevators, and the young man noted that one of the two was not running. It bore a placard, "Out of order."

His thoughts reverted to the mysterious call on the wire. Was it really a joke? Certainly the tension in the woman's voice had been real enough. Still she might be an actress. But then why go to the trouble of an impersonal public phone booth? On the other hand, if it was not a hoax, why had he, of all persons, been selected to give the warning to Captain Fortesque?

"It's a joke, all right," Stockton decided wrathfully, but decided to wait and see it through.

It got to be ten-thirty, and three minutes past the half-hour, and still no sign of Captain Fortesque. The "dead" elevator started running, and the Ethiopian chauffeur removed the "Out of order" sign from the grill door. A slight man with somewhat stooped shoulders, heavily smoked glasses and a small black mustache came down the stairs and hurried over to the desk. Stockton noticed idly that he was muffled to the chin and that his face had the dead-white pallor of extreme ill-health. He tossed a key on the desk, said something to the clerk, and went out into the rain.

And still no sign of the man who was "in grave danger of his life."

The young man waited another five minutes and then went over to the desk.

"I wonder what can be keeping Captain Fortesque?" he asked.

"That's curious," said the clerk, glancing at the clock. "I've never known him to be late before."

A sudden, chilling premonition of something very wrong struck Stockton. "Look here," he said abruptly, "get me the Riverside Chess Club on the phone, will you? I want to see if he has started yet."

The clerk, who evidently acted as switchboard operator as well, plugged in, gave a number and nodded at a telephone on the desk. Stockton took it.

"Hello, the Riverside Club? Has Captain Fortesque left there yet? Yes, Captain Josh Fortesque. He has? How long ago? Ten-fifteen? Are you sure he was there tonight? No, he hasn't reached his hotel yet."

He hung up the receiver, a little perturbed. Well, he'd wait a few minutes longer, then he'd go home and think of some other plan.

Again he sat down and lit a cigarette to while away the time. Insensibly his thoughts reverted to work in hand at the office, and it was with something of a start that he glanced at the clock again to see that it was nearly eleven.

Somewhat perturbed, he went to the desk.

"Look here," he said, "I'm from the district attorney's office, and about an hour ago I got a telephone message asking me to come over here—I live just around the cor-

ner—and warn Captain Fortesque that his life was in danger. It seems rather——"

He stopped short, staring, for suddenly the clerk had burst into a hearty laugh.

"What's funny in that?" Stockton demanded, frowning.

"Excuse me, sir," said the clerk, still chuckling, "but the captain is a good deal of a joker. He's put one over on you, that's all."

"Huh!" grunted Stockton angrily. "I thought it might be a joke, but never guessed that he was the joker himself. Well, he'll find that it isn't quite so funny as he thinks it, to drag me out on a wild-goose chase on a night like this."

"Oh, you mustn't mind the captain, sir," hastened the clerk. "Everybody likes him after they get used to him. Why, he sprang a trick fountain-pen on me last night that near nipped my finger off, but *I* don't mind. He's got the best heart in the world. Why, even Mr. Junkin, the proprietor here, is sore at him just now for something he did at the chess club the other night. That's why we call him Captain Josh—name's Josiah, you know."

"Well," said the attorney, unmollified, "it isn't my idea of a joke at all. Why would he go to the trouble of getting a woman to telephone me? And why pick on *me*? I don't know him."

The clerk had lost his smile. "A woman, you say, sir?"

"Yes, and she *seemed* to be considerably upset. Why?"

"Then, sir," said the clerk with conviction, "the captain didn't have anything to do with it, I'm certain. He hasn't any use for any woman at all except his niece—claims they're all designin' females tryin' to marry him. Why, it's the only thing he's ever dead serious about."

Stockton was nonplussed. There was a chance, of course, that the clerk was in on the joke. He shot a keen glance at the man and decided against it. He was plainly perturbed.

"Well, anyhow," he said somewhat impatiently, "I've waited around here to give him the message as long as I'm going to. Look at the weather—doesn't it look like a joke to drag me out in it?"

"It does at that," admitted the clerk. "Still, it would certainly be a new one for the Cap to get a woman to do it for him. Sure it was a woman and not the Cap talking in a squeak?"

Stockton thought of the drug clerk's description of the veiled woman, and shook his head. Of course the man might have been coached to give the reply—but no, Fortesque had been at the club and the call certainly had come from the West Nineties.

"Where is the Riverside Club?"

"About six blocks down the street, sir, near Eightieth."

No, it had not been the captain, though it might have been an accomplice.

"Well," said the young attorney, "just to be on the safe side, you tell Captain Fortesque what I've said when he comes in, and say with my compliments—I'm Robert Stockton of the district attorney's office—that I hope he won't be inconvenienced by the great danger that threatens his life."

But the clerk, instead of grinning appreciatively, was staring in a startled way at the door. Stockton turned.

A policeman, his uniform hidden under a dripping rubber rain-coat, had come in with determination in every move and step.

"Gimme a connection," he demanded gruffly, throwing his cape aside and snatching up the telephone on the desk. "Headquarters."

"What's the matter?" asked Stockton as the clerk sprang to obey.

The policeman stared at him suspiciously. "There's a dead man lyin' out there on the sidewalk," he said. "Know anything about it?"

CHAPTER TWO

IN THE RAIN

FOR a moment Stockton tensed all over, like a hunting-dog at sight of game; and in that moment he realized that the mysterious warning was no grim jest, but grim earnest. By a sort of premonition he knew who the dead man would prove to be.

"I'm Stockton of the district attorney's office," he said swiftly to the policeman, while the frightened clerk was jabbing wildly at the switchboard in an effort to raise police headquarters. "I'll go out there and watch for you." He whipped out his card-case and showed his credentials. "How did you find him?"

"Just this second as I was doin' me beat. I niver touched him, sor," said the man, receiver at ear. "I'm O'Rourke. Go ahead, I'll be wid yez in a jiffy. He's around the corner on the avenyeh."

Stockton fastened his coat and jammed his hat over his eyes, his lips set in a thin, grim line. The character of Captain Fortesque rather appealed to him, and he felt no love for the direct cause of that telephone message, whoever he or she might be.

He turned the corner in the rain, which had moderated a little, but was still coming down purposefully. There, close beside the Junkin, stretched out at length in the light from a corner arc, was the body of a man.

He was lying on his face on the sidewalk. His hat had rolled a couple of feet away. In the center of the nearly bald gray head, with its closely trimmed hair, was a small, round wound from which the blood had oozed in a pool on the concrete. He was dressed in well-cut clothes of good texture, and was plainly a gentleman.

Stockton could not see the face, which was turned to the icy walk, and he did not care to move the body before the authorities arrived. The figure was that of a tall man, well-dressed and with close-cropped, grizzled hair. Unless he was greatly mistaken the mysterious warning for Captain Fortesque had been in vain.

Almost at once the young attorney noted that the man had fallen in an unusual position. His arms and hands were lying closely by his side.

"Dead before he hit the ground," thought Stockton. "If he had fallen first, before he was killed, he'd have thrown out his arms to save himself." He touched the body. Rigor mortis had not set in, and it was still faintly warm. The man could have been dead only a few minutes—he could not judge how many.

The policeman, O'Rourke, joined him at this point.

"See anything suspicious?" asked the attorney.

"Not a thing. Ain't saw more'n two people since ten o'clock, barrin' over on Broadway."

Suddenly Stockton, still studying the body with help of the nearby arc light, gave a stifled exclamation.

"What is it?" exclaimed the policeman eagerly, bending with him.

For answer the young man pointed. Just beyond the dead man's feet was a mark on the concrete sidewalk. It was a small Maltese cross drawn in white chalk.

"Cross marks the spot!" ejaculated Stockton.

"Probably some o' them damn' boy scouts," the officer decided, after examining it. "They're forever markin' up the walks with their Injun trails and the like."

"Probably," echoed Stockton, but he was not satisfied in

the least. Barring coincidence, and that would be pretty far-fetched in this case, if it was really murder, as it looked to be, the murderer had marked the exact spot where his victim was to be struck down!

"Well," said the policeman, straightening up, "there ain't nothin' more as we can do till they get here."

"Did you notify the medical examiner?" asked the young man. He was on fire to begin an investigation, but did not like to interfere with the work of the proper authorities.

"Sure," said O'Rourke. Then, glancing up the street, "I guess that's thim now."

A police patrol wagon had turned into the avenue a couple of blocks away and was speeding toward them as fast as the driver dared go on the slippery pavement.

Stockton stooped quickly and picked up the dead man's hat. It was a derby of fashionable cut and a good make. It was quite wet inside and out, which was not surprising. In the top of the crown was a round hole, less than half an inch across, evidently driven through from outside. There was no sign of blood on the hat-band or elsewhere. On the sweat-band in gilt letters were the initials, "J. S. F."

He laid the hat back where he had found it and straightened up just as the auto whirred to a stop in the rain and the police boiled out of it. He was sharply questioned at first, but promptly proved his identity. A few moments later the precinct captain's little red machine came up on a run, followed by another auto-load of plain-clothes men. Stockton stepped back a few paces to be out of the way, while a cordon was thrown around the block and the police and detectives began their routine work.

A few minutes later, Dr. Potts, of the Medical Examiner's Staff, drove up in a touring car, which he had the driver park around the corner. After he had examined the body he stepped back, nodding to Stockton, whom he knew well, and gave permission for it to be carried into a drug-store on the corner. The young man went along. The body was laid on the floor while a policeman was sent to get the nearest undertaker.

Face-up in the strong light of the store, the dead man proved to be a big, soldierly looking fellow of perhaps fifty years, with a lined, weather-tanned face and gray, bushy eyebrows. In the repose of death his rather grim and forceful mouth was relieved by little laughter wrinkles in the corners, and at the corners of his eyes. His face showed no trace of the emotion that is so often frozen into that of one who has seen a violent death before it came.

The nose was bruised, and a little trickle of blood had dried around his nostrils.

"Hit in the face and then his head crushed in," opinioned Dr. Potts, but the young man shook his head.

"That was caused when he fell face down," he remarked in a hushed voice.

Both looked up sharply at a gasp from the pallid drug-clerk, who was craning his neck from the edge of the little group.

"Know who it is?" asked the physician.

"My God, it's Captain Fortesque!" cried the clerk hysterically. "I sh'd say I *do* know him—he lives across the street in the Junkin. My Lord, ain't it awful?"

"When did you see him last?" pursued the doctor, looking the frightened youth over keenly.

"Only this afternoon. He came in for a couple of cigars before he went to the club. My God, whoever 'd want to kill *him?*" The young fellow's pallor had assumed a a greenish tinge, and suddenly he was taken very sick.

While the medical examiner's deputy in his capacity of physician was administering first aid, Stockton slipped out and went back to the scene of the death. It might have been accidental, of course, but—no, it was not. That telephone message, and the mark on the sidewalk that must have been directly under the captain's feet when he was struck down, spelled something other than accident. He dismissed the drug-clerk's emotion as sheer nerves. That youth knew nothing about the affair.

The rain had turned into thin, chilling mist that threatened to freeze again into a worse coating for the sidewalks. But it had not washed away the cross-mark, which showed plainly in the electric light.

Stockton studied the little cross intently, while a policeman looked on in mild amusement. At once a new fact struck him. It had not been drawn recently, for it was somewhat scuffed by the feet of passers-by. That meant that it had been drawn early the night before, at the latest, when the pavement had been clear and dry. It might have been even earlier, for there had been several days of fine weather with little or no snow. The rain had brought it out clearly.

Also, the young man decided, it had not been drawn by the unskilled hand of a boy scout; it was much too regular of outline. Stockton straightened up. There, exactly there, was where Captain Fortescue had stood when he was struck down from behind, and by an enemy who had come up with considerable swiftness and in perfect silence. This was clear, because the captain had had not the least warning of his fate.

With very little hope of being able to discover anything, he backed away, keeping to one side, until he could get the reflection of the arc-light on the ice-covered concrete, in the faint hope of being able to distinguish footsteps. To his surprise and delight he found that there were some, in the thin slush on the surface of the ice caused by the rain—a single line of them, advancing directly toward the cross; the victim's, of course. They were the more easily distinguishable in the rather unsatisfactory light from the fact that for reasons best known to himself the dead captain has seen fit to walk unusually close to the building.

But there were no other footprints near these. Of that he was certain. There was not the faintest trace of them.

Then how had the murderer, if murderer there were, crept up on his victim?

Puzzled, Stockton backed still further, and suddenly stopped with a muttered exclamation. About twenty-five feet from the cross was another chalk mark on the sidewalk; this time a line, broad and well defined, drawn across from the wall toward the curb. The dead man, judging from the position in which he was found, had first crossed this line, then reached the other mark, and there had been struck down. And for this distance at least he had kept close to the wall, hardly two feet away, for even here the marks of his heavy boots were faintly visible.

The lawyer stood for a few moments looking carefully around for anything the detectives, who had already been over the ground, might have ignored. There was nothing whatever to be seen, save the wet, icy pavements that reflected the street and other lights in lines of snaky fire, and the dark splotch where Fortescue had been lying. If there were any other significant footmarks here they had been tramped out by the feet of many policemen and detectives.

Acting more on impulse than design, Stockton turned and walked slowly away from the scene of the crime (if crime it were, and there seemed little doubt of that) in the direction from which the dead captain had come. He kept a sharp lookout for anything whatever that might prove significant, but nothing was to be found. Nothing, that is, until he had got clearly two blocks away; and then he all but passed on without stopping. It was merely

a soiled and bedraggled handkerchief, lying in the roadway.

In the very act of continuing his hopeless quest he paused, struck by two significant facts. First, the handkerchief was not lying at a crossing, but halfway down a block, and there was no wind to carry it there; and second, it was too big for a lady's, and men very rarely lose theirs.

He went and picked up the sopping thing. At least one automobile had run over it, and the skid-chain had nearly cut it in two; but when he opened it out gingerly in the drizzling rain he smiled and his eyes narrowed. For there inside it, faint and rain-diffused but unmistakable, was a trace of blood.

Wet as it was, he thrust it carefully into his ulster pocket and turned back toward the hotel.

CHAPTER THREE

THE THIRD CHALK MARK

UNDER ordinary circumstances there would have been a seething elbowing, morbidly curious crowd of New Yorkers, to whom any event, no matter how trivial, is a Roman holiday, around the scene of the death in less than a minute. But the night was so very bad, the district so quietly respectable and the hour so late that by the time Robert Stockton was ready to take up the next phase of the mystery there were hardly half a dozen curious spectators in evidence, kept at a respectful distance by the police, and shivering in the rain.

In the lobby of the Junkin the atmosphere was now tense. It was full of police and plain-clothes men. At one side a tall, sullen West Indian negro in uniform, the operator of the "dead" elevator, was being questioned by the precinct captain. He was leaning against a pillar, his eyes rolling, and Stockton caught a gleam of steel at his wrists as he moved restlessly.

"I ain't done nuffin'," said the man loudly in response to something the captain side. The police had evidently made a capture.

Dr. Potts was leaning against the desk, talking earnestly with the white-faced night clerk. As Stockton paused, a little puzzled as to his next move, the medical examiner's physician beckoned to him.

"You better get this, Bob," he said as the young man joined him. "Here's the dope as I have it so far.

"The dead man is Captain Josiah S. Fortesque, U. S. Army, retired. Lately he was in the Immigration service, but gave up all active work three years ago, since when he has lived here at the Junkin. He's not married, and his only known relative is a niece."

Stockton nodded and told what he knew of the case—the dead man's character and the telephone message.

The physician's bluff, good-natured face was grave. "Looks like murder, doesn't it?" he said.

At this moment Inspector Morgan of the Central Office hurried in, nodded curtly to Stockton and more genially to Dr. Potts and joined them. He was a big man with a keen, grim face, and looked a detective, every inch of him.

The doctor repeated what he had told Stockton, and Morgan nodded.

"Was he mixed up with any skirts you know of?" he asked of the clerk.

"No, sir," answered the youth promptly. "The captain had no use for women nohow, exceptin' his niece."

"Where's Junkin?" asked the detective. "I wanta have a talk with him."

Gifford, the clerk, looked uneasy. "He'll be down in a minute, sir," he said. "I called him as soon as I knew of the—the tragedy, sir. He was asleep."

"Asleep, eh?" the inspector grunted. "Where's his apartment?"

"Ten-twenty-eight, sir, on the tenth floor."

"And Fortesque's?"

"Ten-twenty-five, same floor."

The inspector's eyes narrowed. "Any trouble between them?"

The clerk looked frightened. "Why, I can't say as there was——" he was beginning hesitatingly, when Morgan cut in.

"Now, you cut that stalling; get me?" he snarled, thrusting his face almost into that of the pale young man. "This ain't no pink tea, it's murder. Come across, now, or it's yours for the Tombs."

Gifford quailed. "Y-yes, sir! Mr. Junkin was pretty sore, sir, because Mr. Fortesque kept naggin' him about some play or other he made in a chess game last week, sir. That's all I meant."

"Well, it's enough," said the inspector with finality. "I wanta have a talk with Junkin right now."

The precinct captain walked over from the sullen negro, looking well pleased with himself. "You can lay off now, inspector," he announced. "I got the guy."

"Who?" asked the doctor and Morgan together. Stockton had said nothing, but was missing even less.

"That coon." The captain jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "Elevator boy. Fortesque made a monkey of him yesterday, and he threatened to cut his heart out."

"That's hardly proof that he's guilty," remarked the attorney, who knew Captain Swazey by sight.

"But that ain't all. I found he was off duty from ten-fifteen to ten-thirty-five. Claims he was tryin' to find a short-circuit in the elevator hoist, the engineer bein' away. That right, young man?" He turned to the night clerk.

"Yes, sir. This is Simpson's day off." The clerk wet his lips. "The elevator *was* out of commission, sir."

"Well, anyhow Johnson, the coon, won't talk, but I got it all doped out. Johnson went down in the basement all right, but then he got a pick-axe (O'Rourke found it), and went to the basement entrance and waited, knowin' that Fortesque 'd be home sharp at ten-thirty. That right, young feller?"

"Mr. Fortesque always came home at the same hour, sir, as regular as clock-work," replied the clerk.

The captain nodded. "You see? Johnson waited in the entrance until Fortesque come along, then he snuck up behind him and laid him out cold with the pick-axe—I knew damn well it was a pick-axe when I seen that hole in his head. Then he snuck back and fixed the machine and went to runnin' his elevator again. Ain't that clear?"

"It *sounds* all right," admitted the doctor doubtfully.

"Aw, you're way off your base," snorted Inspector Morgan. "I know who done it, all right. Where is Junkin?"

"Here he comes now, sir," hastened the clerk.

The important little man whom Stockton had noticed earlier in the evening was coming toward them from the elevators. He was rather fastidiously dressed for one so hastily aroused, but his bow tie was slewed around under one ear and his hair unbrushed. For all that he looked extremely dignified, not to say pompous, as he paused and surveyed the group by the desk.

"Fortesque's been murdered," the inspector shot at him suddenly. "Know who done it?"

"I am aware that Mr. Fortesque has met an untimely end," said the little man in a high, nasal voice. "I may say that I consider it a just retribution for one whose

levity led him to indulge in persecution of a highly distasteful nature." His eyes, a little too wide open, gleamed resentfully.

The inspector seemed slightly taken aback. "I asked you if you know who done it?" he repeated fiercely.

"I do not, sir," returned the little man with equal fierceness; and before the inspector could get his breath, he rushed on. "I will trouble you to address me in a more respectful tone of voice, sir. Mr. Fortesque had the temerity to make fun of a perfectly natural—ah—oversight on my part in a game of chess. Now I ask you, gentlemen, is *it* a matter for low hilarity and pointless humor that I should, through a temporary absence of attention, have been tricked into being victimized by a scholar's mate? *Is* it?" His eyes were bright with anger.

Inspector Morgan was nonplussed for a moment, then changed his tactics. "I didn't mean to get your goat, Mr. Junkin," he said in what was intended for a soothing tone, and added behind his hand in a whispered aside to Dr. Potts: "Nuts. He's the guy."

But although Stockton guessed that Junkin's skirts were in need of cleaning, he did not believe the man to be insane, as did the inspector, evidently. He understood the little man at once, and got a clearer picture of Captain Fortesque's nature.

Junkin was wholly lacking in a sense of humor. Fortesque was an inveterate joker, and of the practical variety as well. That being his character, he would not know when to stop, and on finding a victim who showed discomfiture, would be the more delighted and would carry the joke to a point where thoughts of murder might well be engendered.

This was plainly the case with the morose West Indian negro, whose nature is to resent fiercely any insult or familiarity. And Stockton suspected that Junkin *was* perhaps a little mad, just enough to make him unduly aware of his own importance.

On the other hand, if the negro was guilty, why had there been but one faint set of footsteps on the sidewalk? And if a pick-axe had not been used, and murder it was, how had Junkin committed it—or, for that matter, anybody else?

And Junkin was even now establishing an excellent alibi. Aside from the night clerk, there had been a couple of guests in the lobby since before ten o'clock. All three, and the other elevator boy (Johnson refused to say anything), stated positively that after Junkin had gone up to his room he had not returned. Stockton corroborated this.

"How about the fire escape?" asked Morgan.

"There aren't any on the back of the building, sir," said the clerk. "They're all in front. And Mr. Junkin's apartment is at the back."

Junkin, who had been growing steadily redder and redder, suddenly burst out, by this time almost purple:

"See here, sir, do you mean to accuse *me* of this—this affair?"

"Now, just go easy, Mr. Junkin," said the Medical Examiner's physician. "In a case like this everybody is under suspicion until he has proven his innocence."

But the little man was not to be placated, and became so furious and abusive that Morgan returned to his official manner with a sudden roar, threatening to have the proprietor in the Tombs instanter if he didn't shut up. This had the desired effect, and Junkin, after announcing that he would see his lawyer before he would say another word, retired to a chair in the lobby, where he sat fuming under the eye of a hostile policeman.

At this point the first of the reporters from the morning papers arrived—two of them; alert young men with keen, yet weary eyes and an air of extreme boredom. Having extracted everything they could from the inspector, physician, Stockton, the police captain, the clerk and the negro, and having pumped Junkin dry of all he chose to say, which was voluminous if not very enlightening, they commandeered a couple of the telephones, and gave their information to their respective editors in terse, meaty sentences. Then they adjourned to the back of the lobby to smoke and talk shop.

The sullen Johnson was carried off in a patrol wagon as a suspicious character, even if the charge of murder were not placed against him. Inspector Morgan went back to his own view of the affair.

"What was he killed with?" he demanded. "Of course that coon *may* have done it, but I don't take much stock in Swazey's idea. Where's that pick-axe they was talkin' about?"

O'Rourke produced it. It was an ordinary pick of small size, and Gifford, the clerk, explained that it was used sometimes in the work of clearing the walks of snow and ice. There was not the least trace of blood or hairs on it, and Morgan shrugged it aside indifferently.

"Wasn't there anything else?" he demanded, but the detectives declared that they had gone over the ground and district carefully and had found absolutely nothing.

Stockton hesitated a moment, then drew the crumpled handkerchief from his pocket.

"I found this a couple of blocks down the street," he said with some hesitation. "Maybe it——"

"That?" Morgan's expression was close to a sneer. "How could you cave in a guy's dome with a handkerchief? That ain't got nothin' whatever to do with it."

Stockton returned the thing to his pocket with a shrug. Frankly he was none too sure that it had any bearing on the case, but somehow he believed that it had. Anyhow it was a clue really worth following up later.

"How about his relatives?" he suggested. "You say he had a niece?" This to the clerk.

"Yes, sir. Miss Vida Fortesque is her name. She was here pretty often to see him."

"Where does she live?" asked the inspector, but the clerk could not tell.

"We'll give his apartment the once over, then," decided Morgan. "Got a pass-key?"

"You won't need one," hastened the clerk. "Here's Mr. Fortesque's key in the box where he left it this afternoon." He took it out and handed it to the detectives. "He never carried it with him, always left it here in the office."

Indifferent to Morgan's scowl and pointed hints, Stockton accompanied him and the Medical Examiner's deputy up in one of the two elevators. He was quite within his rights in making his own investigation, and did not propose to be turned aside by the detective's veiled enmity.

Fortesque's apartment proved to be merely two large rooms and a bath. They were tastefully furnished, but evidently more for use than show or even great comfort. Not a place to tempt a thief.

One of the large French windows in the bedroom facing on the street had slammed shut in the draught when Morgan opened the door, and now swung open again. Stockton went in to close it while the other two bent over the desk.

He found that the window reached nearly to the floor, and gave on a narrow, iron-railinged stone balcony that circled the building at this floor and led to a fire-escape at one end. On an impulse he stepped outside and glanced down toward the street; and then he gave vent to a low exclamation.

Directly below him and ten stories down was the scene of the tragedy. He could see the black smudge of blood

on the sidewalk, and even the chalk line to one side was visible from here. A policeman was still on guard, pacing slowly back and forth. The rain had stopped and it was perceptably colder. A clock in some church steeple in the distance boomed out the hour of midnight.

Only midnight! It seemed impossible that so much could have happened in an hour.

As he turned to re-enter the window Stockton's foot struck against something immovable that rang hollowly. He glanced down. The thing was a pitcher of coarse white ware, such as is used in most hotels to hold ice-water. It was lying on its side and was frozen firmly to the stonework.

Left outside to keep cool, Stockton thought, and overturned in some way. He glanced over the edge again, and drew back with another exclamation.

Under his hand, and plainly visible beneath a fairly thick coating of ice, was another chalk-mark, an arrow-head drawn across the iron railing.

CHAPTER FOUR

A PIECE OF GUM AND A TOOTHPICK

STOCKTON'S first impulse was to call the attention of the other two men to his discoveries; then his jaw hardened. Let Morgan make his own finds. As for the physician—well, maybe a hint—— But then the latter was interested only in establishing whether the death were accidental or not, yet the chalk-marks spelled murder. Well, let them see for themselves what he had seen, if they wanted to.

Just beyond the dead man's feet was a mark on the concrete sidewalk. It was a small Maltese cross.

He went back to the living-room, where the others were still busy over an open desk. Dr. Potts looked up and inquired: "Find anything in there?"

"I didn't see any papers," Stockton equivocated.

"This desk was unlocked," the doctor went on, turning over a pile of letters, "and we've got the niece's address. Only relative he seems to have had."

Stockton said nothing for so long that the doctor glanced at him in surprise. The young man was standing beside the table in the center of the room, staring intently at a photograph in a plain silver frame.

It was the face of a girl of perhaps twenty-five years, with dark, sweetly serious eyes and a grave little mouth that looked as though it might be induced to smile divinely. Photographs are deceptive, but Stockton got an impression from this one that its original was dark of hair, small and alert. Across the lower right-hand corner was written in a neat but striking script, "To Uncle J., from Vida."

"What you got, Bob?" asked the physician, turning.

Stockton put the picture down rather hurriedly, coloring a little, and picked up the only other one there, obviously that of Fortesque himself. "Oh, nothing," he said, with an attempt at indifference. And then to change the subject, "By the way, Fortesque was killed beneath his own window."

Morgan looked up with a start. "How do you know?" he demanded.

"You can see the blood on the sidewalk."

The inspector's eyes narrowed. "Junkin could get in here with a pass-key any time he wanted to," he muttered. "Now, I wonder——" He left the sentence unfinished and hurried into the next room. A moment later the doctor joined him.

Stockton went to the desk and soon found what he was looking for. Her writing was not to be mistaken. He had a curious reluctance to read the delicately scented note, but its envelope, like several others there, bore the return address in the corner: "Miss Vida Fortesque, The Alhambra, 139th St."

He copied the address into his notebook. He would see Miss Fortesque first thing in the morning. The thought was oddly pleasurable, but he did not stop to analyze his emotions.

The key to the room was lying on the table where the inspector had tossed it, and Stockton picked it up and studied it intently. He had half expected to find fresh file-marks on its wards to show that a duplicate had been made recently, but was disappointed.

Morgan and Dr. Potts came back from the next room arguing over a new possibility. The physician held that there was nothing but co-incidence in the fact that the captain had been found beneath the window of his room, but Morgan was stubbornly convinced that it was Junkin's doings.

"I tell you the guy's a nut!" he exclaimed angrily. "Didn't you see his eyes when he was talkin' about Fortesque? He hated the captain like poison, and bein' a nut he'd take some queer way to get hunk with him, like droppin' somethin' on him out of his own window."

"But what?" demanded the doctor. "You'd have found it down there on the sidewalk."

Morgan hunched his shoulders. "I dunno what it was. That's for us to find out."

Stockton, who had been meditating intently, suddenly

snapped his fingers. "Look here," he said, "has any one thought of phoning Miss Fortesque? She ought to know what has happened to her uncle for one thing, and she may know of something that will throw more light on the affair anyhow."

Dr. Potts nodded. "That's right, Bob," he agreed. "Or better yet, I'll go and see her myself."

"Bring her here," said the inspector. "Maybe the skirt knows something worth while."

Stockton flushed resentfully at the man's tone, but let it pass. "I'll phone her," he suggested as the doctor started for the door, but Morgan vetoed the offer promptly.

"It'll only prepare her," he explained, "and if she's took by surprise she may let something fall that'll help out. You can't never tell."

When the doctor had gone, Morgan turned to the young man suddenly. "Say, listen," he said, his eyes narrowed, "that wasn't the notion you got just now. Come across!"

Stockton grinned. "No," he confessed, "it wasn't."

"Then what d'you know?" demanded the inspector.

"We might as well work together in this," said the attorney. "What I have in mind may have nothing whatever to do with the case, but it may be important," and he explained about the chalk-marks.

The inspector grunted scornfully. "A cross where he was killed, a line a few feet away, and a line on the edge of the balcony? How d'you figure they fit in?"

"And only a single set of footprints," added Stockton. "Look here." He sat down at the desk, found a piece of paper and a pencil, and drew a diagram. "Here's the side of the Junkin facing on West End avenue. Here's the window in the room there, ten stories up. Here's the sidewalk, with the place directly underneath the window where Fortesque's body was lying, and where the cross-mark is."

"Yes?" The inspector was interested in spite of himself.

"Here's where the chalk line is. Fortesque was walking from the line to the cross when he was struck down, see?"

"Well?"

"The line is visible from the window in there. There aren't any other footsteps except Fortesque's on the inner edge of the sidewalk; yet Fortesque was killed so suddenly that he was dead when he hit the pavement."

"How d'you know that?" exclaimed Morgan.

"His arms were beside him—he fell squarely on his face without throwing them out to save himself. Now, listen. I can't give you the figures now because I've forgotten them if I ever knew them, but I have a notion that a falling object would take the same time to reach the sidewalk if dropped from that balcony that it took Fortesque to walk the twenty-five feet from the line to the cross."

The inspector stared. "I don't get you yet," he said, scratching his head.

"Suppose somebody was waiting on the balcony there for Fortesque to come along," Stockton explained. "If my guess is right, he could have dropped whatever it was that killed him just as he reached the line, then went in and shut the window. Fortesque and that thing would have reached the same place at the same moment, and the thing would have been falling at the rate of a hundred and fifty feet a minute then, or thereabouts—I said I've forgotten the figures. Anyhow, the thing hit Fortesque squarely on the head and killed him."

Morgan pursed his lips, unwilling admiration in his eyes. "Say," he said, "that's pretty good work!" He thought a moment. "But suppose there'd been a wind?"

"There wasn't any."

"And why wasn't the weapon stickin' in Fortesque's head when he was found?"

"Well, there's a possibility that would cover that point and even prove that it wasn't murder after all," said Stockton slowly. "But I haven't thought it out much yet. I admit that's a pretty weak point, but otherwise the theory holds water."

Suddenly the inspector became animated. "Look here," he exclaimed, "I'll go down to the street and walk along just like Fortesque done, and you drop something and see if it hits me."

"It'll kill you!" exclaimed Stockton, aghast.

"I don't mean anything heavy—here's a piece of gum and a toothpick. Chew up the gum and stick it on the pick to help it fall straight and drop it, see? If that don't convict Junkin, I'll eat my hat. It's just the sort of crazy scheme that he'd dope out."

He hurried out of the room, and Stockton obediently put the gum in his mouth, then went out on the balcony again. It was getting perceptibly colder, and the clouds overhead were breaking up, showing occasional glimpses of frosty stars.

He shivered a little and drew his coat more closely around him. Presently down below he saw the burly figure of the inspector looking up at him. He waved an arm.

Morgan went down the street, after a word with the watching policeman, until he came to the chalk-mark, clearly visible from here. He paused a moment to study it; went on past it, then turned and came swinging along at a brisk pace.

Watching closely, Stockton dropped the gum with the toothpick for a trailer just before Morgan's foot passed the chalk-line. He watched eagerly as the inspector advanced straight toward where the cross was, invisible at this height.

As the detective came beneath the window he ducked his head suddenly; stopped and took off his hat, examining it. Then he turned his face up in the lamplight.

"You win!" he called faintly. "That's how he done it!"

He went on and turned the corner toward the entrance of the hotel.

Stockton paused a moment, thinking, before he reentered the window. It certainly looked bad for Junkin. The man would have easy access to the pass-keys, and there would be nothing in his entering or coming from a guest's room during his absence, if another guest or one of the servants happened to see him.

Then, too, the man had shown an anything but veiled hatred for the dead captain, and one that was not wholly normal. The scheme *was* one that would fit his peculiar mind. He would be in the best possible position to study his victim's habits, and would have known to a minute almost when Fortesque was due to get home. The dead man was very regular in his habits, and could be expected home at a certain definite hour each evening. Also the Riverside Chess Club was a few blocks south of the Junkin on West End avenue, and Fortesque had been coming from that direction.

Yes, it looked pretty black for the proprietor of the hotel. Yet if he really were guilty, would he not have veiled his hatred? Could any but a really innocent man have been so outspoken in his resentment toward his victim, and above all on the very grounds that had, presumably, caused the murder? Would Junkin have shown his anger at the gibes over a misplay in chess if he had killed the giber for making them? The young attorney doubted it.

And then a new thought struck him. There were no other footmarks save Fortesque's in the light slush on the sidewalk. But might there be others up here on the balcony?

At once he stooped to peer at the stone-work, but it

was too dark to see. He recalled noticing a small electric torch in the dead man's bedroom, and went back for it.

And by the light of the torch he had no difficulty in discovering a single row of prints coming along the balcony from the direction of the fire-escape. There were none returning.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HANDKERCHIEF

STOCKTON thought of going back to wait for Morgan to come upstairs. Then he decided that the inspector would waste no time in sending Junkin to headquarters for a more rigid examination, if not on a charge of murder. The evidence so far was pretty slim, but the police do not take any chances where murder is concerned.

That would delay the inspector for a few minutes; and meanwhile the footmarks up here might be an important clue. There was no danger of his tramping them out while investigating, for already the thin slush had frozen solid, preserving the marks for a few hours at least. He decided to act as once.

First, with help of a sheet of paper from his pocket and a pencil, he got a good outline of one of the marks. The little electric torch had a snap that could be set to keep the light burning, so this was not hard to do.

The man—or was it a man?—who had made the marks had worn new rubbers. That was clear from the sharply defined indentations of heel and sole. They were small and narrow and pointed, and might have been made either by the feet of a small man, or by those of a woman.

Stockton then followed the trail. It led along the stone ledge to the fire-escape, and there disappeared.

It was a pretty risky business to clamber down that icy ladder in the dark, but Stockton's blood was up and he did not hesitate. There were more evidences of the rubbers on the treads of the fire-escape, and at the bottom they disappeared again before a window that immediately faced the iron ladder. The room from which this window looked was dark.

The window was like that in Fortesque's room—high and reaching nearly to the floor, and opening in two leaves. He tried it cautiously. It opened to his touch.

There was no way of telling the number of this room, but Stockton marked its position. This was the ninth floor, and the room, or apartment, was the one nearest the corner of the building.

First satisfying himself that the footprints could not have come from a lower floor—in fact there was a clear impress of one of them on the windowsill—he climbed carefully again to the upper floor and went along to Fortesque's apartment. Morgan had not yet returned.

Before Stockton could act on his new clue the inspector rang the bell impatiently. As the attorney opened the door he came in with a grin and satisfied smile.

"It was the right dope, all right," he commented, and showed his derby hat. The gum was stuck to the crown of it, and Stockton shivered as the grim tragedy was brought home to him in this way.

"I sent Junkin to the Tombs," said the inspector. "We ain't got much on him yet, I know, but he's safer there. Gee, I had a job dodging them damn reporters."

Pleased at his friendliness, the young man told of the footmarks he had found, which led from the ninth floor, but Morgan shook his head.

"Even if that's so," he said, "it only proves that Junkin was too smart to come direct to his apartment. I'm goin' to give his own rooms the once-over before Potts gets back with the girl. He ought to be here pretty soon now."

While he was at the phone ordering the pass-keys to be sent up, Stockton slipped out and went downstairs to investigate. He found the number of the room to which the footsteps led to be 917. He pressed the doorbell tentatively, but there was no answer. The door was fastened. Thereupon he took the elevator down to the lobby to interview the clerk.

The place was deserted now, save for a couple of plain-clothes men lolling on chairs and discussing the price of food with a group of reporters. One of them strolled over, smoking a cigarette.

"'Lo, Stock," he said with an easy familiarity which the attorney resented. "Anything new?"

Stockton shook his head. "They've arrested the proprietor of this hotel."

"Old Junk? Yeh, I know that. What else?"

The young man was worried. Miss Fortesque would be along in a very few minutes, and he had an instinctive desire to protect her against the annoyance of these newsgatherers.

"Look here," he said, "there's one thing you might like to chase up," and he told of the chalk-marks on sidewalk and railing, and outlined his reasons for thinking that they were carefully calculated with reference to the military stride of the dead captain.

The reporter seized on the idea with avidity. He called his fellows and they all trooped out in a hurry to chase up the new "lead" for the late editions.

Stockton went to the desk.

"Who has 917?" he asked quietly.

"Mr. Francis, sir—James T. Francis."

"Is he in?" The question was superfluous.

Gifford glanced at the nest of pigeon-holes behind the desk. "No, sir, there's his key."

"Know when he went out?"

The clerk wasn't sure, but thought it was about a quarter to eleven.

"See if you can't remember better than that," suggested the attorney.

Gifford thought hard; then his face brightened. "Why, yes, I do remember," he said. "He came downstairs in a kind of hurry—walked down. I noticed that he seemed a little excited. He gave me the key and said something about not being back till late, then he went out."

Stockton started. "The man with the smoked glasses? What do you know about him?" he asked. "Has he been here long?"

"Only a couple of weeks, sir. He was night editor on a morning paper until his eyes went back on him. He sleeps nearly all day, on account of being used to it, and goes out a good deal at night."

"Eyes are bad, eh?" pursued Stockton tensely.

"Yes, sir. He always wears big, dark glasses. He seems kind of delicate to me—keeps wrapped up well with his coat collar turned up, and all that."

"What does he look like?"

"Small man, sir, about five foot six. Kind of slight-looking, stoop-shouldered, pale and a little black mustache that looks like he dyes it."

"Pale, you say?"

"Well, more a sickly white look, sir, like he'd just got out of a hospital."

Stockton grunted. It *was* the man he had seen. "I suppose he gave references?"

The clerk shook his head. "We don't generally ask for them, sir, from transients. He seemed all right,

though. Why, did—d'you think he had anything to do with—with Mr. Fortesque?"

"I don't know," said Stockton, truthfully enough. "By the way, did you ever happen to notice his feet?"

"No, sir, I didn't."

"Hm! Well, how about Mr. Junkin's?"

"Old Junk's feet, sir?" Gifford caught himself and turned a trifle red. "That's just what we call him, sir. Why, yes, he's pretty proud of them, says they show breeding. They're small and narrow and pointed."

The attorney's eyebrows went up. That would exactly describe the marks he had found on the ledge. Francis might be the guilty man; or Junkin, who had gone upstairs before ten-thirty, as Stockton recalled, might have used his room immediately after his guest had left it as a means of getting to the fire-escape. On the other hand, Johnson, the negro elevator boy, had been somewhere in the nether regions until after ten-thirty.

However, if Francis left the hotel before Fortesque's death, he was innocent, and Junkin might be guilty. If not, he was pretty certainly guilty—unless a woman had been in the room with him. But no woman had gone out, Stockton was sure of that. And there was no way of telling within a few minutes when the captain had met his fate. He was regular in habits, yes; but he *might* have come early or late that one night.

"Let me have the key to Francis's apartment, will you?" he asked. "I want to give it the once-over before he gets back." But the young attorney doubted very much if he would ever get back.

Gifford yielded up the key without hesitation.

One of the reporters came in hurriedly to know if anything had developed. They were just going back to their respective offices to write the story. Stockton shook his head and the man rushed out again.

Stockton went to the elevators and pressed the bell. The car was somewhere upstairs. Before it had descended he heard the noise of an automobile brought to a stop in front of the hotel; the roar of a cut-out quickly shut off, and then the sound of Dr. Potts' voice addressing some one in a soothing tone. Miss Fortesque had arrived.

She came in leaning on the doctor's arm, a small girl with tumbled masses of soft, dark hair peeping out from under a close mole hat. A big fur coat covered her completely and brought out the pallor of her face. Her dark, tear-wet eyes flashed about the hotel as though searching for some one. She nodded and smiled faintly at Gifford, who greeted her by name; then her eyes came to rest on the grave young attorney, who looked at her pityingly. He hesitated a moment, then went forward to meet them.

"Miss Fortesque, this is Mr. Stockton of the district attorney's office," said Dr. Potts.

Stockton extended a sympathetic hand, and she laid her own small one passively in his while she turned big, hurt eyes up to him.

"I didn't want her to come," the doctor began, "but——"

"I had to," she said almost in a whisper, and her sweet, throaty contralto voice with its slight lingering on the vowels moved the young man oddly. There was such an appeal in her eyes, such a look of a troubled little girl, that he had an impulse to gather her into his arms and let her cry out her sorrow against his coat. "I couldn't even wait for Aunt Vinie to dress. Where is—where is he?" She withdrew her hand from Stockton's.

"He was taken to an undertaker's near here," explained the assistant medical examiner. "It would have been impossible to bring him here, you know," he added gently, "and there was nothing else to be done."

"Oh, poor uncle!" Her voice broke pitifully. "Then I—oh, I can't s-see him?"

"In the morning," promised the doctor in a soothing tone. "Now, Miss Fortesque, you can see of yourself that there's nothing you can do. You'd really better go back home. We'll have to take charge of his papers and so forth until the investigation is over."

The girl started and stared at him with widening eyes. "An investigation? But you told me it was an—an accident, doctor!"

"It may be that. But we have to have an inquiry in any case, you know. There hasn't been anything new, has there?" He turned to Stockton, who was watching the broken-hearted girl with more in his eyes than mere sympathy, though he did not know it.

The young man nodded imperceptibly. "It isn't necessary for Inspector Morgan to see Miss Fortesque to-night, is it?" he asked with a show of matter-of-factness.

Dr. Potts shook his head, his eyes on the attorney. "Miss Fortesque has told me all she could," he said. "I questioned her coming down in the auto."

"Then you really had better go home," said Stockton with gentle firmness. "Will you want to see her to-morrow, doctor?"

Potts nodded. "At ten o'clock."

"Then may I call for you at nine, Miss Fortesque? There are one or two things I'd like to ask you."

"Surely," she murmured. Then with suddenly renewed excitement, "but if it was an accident—Mr. Stockton, *was* it an accident?"

The young man shook his head. "I—I'm afraid it wasn't," he said very gravely. "Listen, Miss Fortesque, do you know anything about a slight, sickly looking man with a small, black mustache and a very pale face, who generally wears big, dark glasses—a former newspaper man?"

The girl struggled bravely for composure. She thought a moment, then shook her head decidedly. "No, I don't," she said. "Why, do you mean—do you suspect——?"

At his commiserating look she broke down altogether. "Oh, poor Uncle J.!" she sobbed. "I'm all he had since Uncle Zeke died, and I couldn't even be with him. Oh, who could have anything against that dear old man—so full of jokes and fun? How *was* he killed? Tell me!" she demanded as Stockton hesitated.

"We think that something fell on him," he said slowly. "We don't know what, though."

The girl stiffened and stared at him with a look of fear in her dark eyes.

"Something *fell* on him, you say?" she echoed.

"Or was dropped."

"That's very strange, very queer," she whispered, and shuddered strongly. "Uncle J.—was always afraid that—something would fall on him!"

Startled, Stockton would have asked for more details, but the girl was so moved as to be all but hysterical, and he forbore. They led her gently back to the motor.

Dr. Potts instructed the phlegmatic chauffeur to take her home and return for him, and the young man saw her comfortably settled, then pressed her small white hand again. "Don't you worry, Miss Fortesque," he comforted clumsily. "We'll get to the bottom of this, and if any one is responsible he shall be punished, no matter who he is. I'll see you at nine o'clock."

The car plunged forward and disappeared around the corner, and Stockton and the doctor went back into the hotel.

"Now, what do you know, Bob?" demanded the physician at once.

The assistant district attorney explained succinctly. "Morgan's convinced that Junkin's the man," he ended, "and has sent him to headquarters. But I believe——"

"Let's have a look at this Francis fellow's diggings right away," decided Potts briskly. "Where's Morgan?"

"Giving Junkin's place the once-over. He's dead sure— Here he is now."

The inspector had stepped from the elevator and came toward them.

"Did y' get the girl?" was his greeting.

"Yes, but she was all broken up and I sent her home again."

Morgan hunched his shoulders indifferently. "Did she talk?"

The doctor outlined what he had gleaned, which was of no great importance. Captain Fortesque had been a soldier most of his life, having seen service in the Spanish-American war, China and the Philippines. He had absolutely no enemies that she knew of, though many men had been ruffled by his peculiar sense of humor until they came

to understand it. Thanks to the captain's genuine geniality and big-heartedness, their anger never lasted more than a few days, and they always became stanch friends.

The inspector nodded from time to time as the recital went on, and finally grunted: "That's the way I doped it out," he said at last. "Junkin's the guy, all right, though I didn't find anything to incriminate him in his rooms."

"There's just a chance——" began Stockton somewhat defiantly, and outlined his own discoveries.

But Morgan shrugged again and dismissed them. "Exactly what I said. Junkin climbed up there after this Francis guy had gone out, just to hide his trail, see? It's him, I tell you. Go and look in Francis's place if you want to, you won't find anything. I'm goin' to blow."

Oddly enough his prediction was completely justified. The physician and the younger man found nothing obviously suspicious in the two rooms of the apartment. Some soiled linen, unmarked save for the hieroglyphics of a laundry, and a cheap suit-case, also unmarked, were all that the rooms contained other than their hotel furniture and a few toilet articles. There was not even a pair of shoes that might be compared with the footprints.

"Nothing to this," decided Dr. Potts after a few minutes of search.

Stockton smiled rather grimly and ran his fingers through his auburn hair. "On the contrary, there's everything to it I should say," he remarked. "A man doesn't leave such a complete lack of his own personality in a place that he expects to come back to."

The doctor stared. "Then you think he's skipped?"

"I do," nodded the attorney. "I think he's the man we want."

"Then we'd better have an alarm sent out for him right away," announced Dr. Potts with energy. "So striking a figure shouldn't be hard to catch."

"They won't catch him," retorted Stockton, who was bending over the bureau. "See that?"

"That" was a box of heavy white face-powder.

"What do you mean?" cried the physician, staring.

"I mean that—oh, damn it, why didn't I think of it in time to ask Miss Fortesque the right question?" exclaimed the attorney in disgust. "I mean that Francis, or whatever his real name is, doesn't look in the least now as he did two hours ago. The bird has flown, doc!"

"I believe you're right, Bob," agreed Potts seriously. "Well, anyhow, anybody that was smart enough to dope out that chalk-mark stunt ought to be able to catch him. Go to it, boy!"

Somewhat embarrassed by the straightforward praise, Stockton continued his investigation, but there was nothing more. Then of a sudden he recalled the handkerchief reposing in his pocket. He drew it out.

"What do you make of that, doc?" he asked.

The physician turned it over in his fingers. "A man's linen handkerchief, a good deal the worse for wear," he said at length. "Hm, blood, eh? That what you picked up down the street?"

"Yes. And it's a *man's* handkerchief," Stockton added. "Too big for a woman's. Now, look here." He pointed to some marks in one corner where the heavy auto wheel-chain had mangled the soggy cloth.

"Private symbol of the laundry that washed it," said the medical examiner's assistant promptly, his eyes beginning to gleam. "Well?"

"Not only that, but the number will identify the man it belongs to. This is KL in big figures, and 119 in small—see?"

"Yes."

"And look at the one on this collar that Francis left. It's MPS, 10642."

"Then it's not the same!" exclaimed the doctor. "You're way off."

"That's a new collar, and the shirts are new—only washed a couple of times at the outside. Francis brought a new outfit for temporary use, expecting to abandon it here, see? But this handkerchief—if it's his—has his *own* laundry mark on it, I'll bet a dollar! He sent these things in the room here under the name of Francis to some other laundry nearer here."

"But what in thunder did he use the handkerchief for, if he did use it at all?" demanded the physician. "And why did he throw it away?"

"I—have a sort of a suspicion," said the lawyer slowly. "Even the most hardened criminals are sometimes unexpectedly squeamish, you know."

Dr. Potts pursed his lips for a whistle.

"How many laundries are there in New York?" the young man went on. "Ten thousand?"

"Ten thousand? I don't know. And maybe it isn't New York." Potts looked startled. "You've got some job, old man, if you expect to look them all up."

"Perhaps I have," admitted Stockton. "Perhaps I have. Why did Fortesque fear a death that should come on him out of the air?"

But the physician could not answer.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT VIDA KNEW

LATE as it was when Stockton finally got home, he did not go to bed at once. There were too many baffling problems in connection with Captain Fortesque's strange death that he wanted to think about; also there was the captain's niece.

But Vida Fortesque he put resolutely out of his mind at first as he got into a bathrobe after discarding most of his damp and chilly clothing, and filled and lit a pipe. Business comes before—that is, Miss Fortesque had nothing directly to do with the affair in hand, which was important.

He hung the bedraggled handkerchief on a radiator to dry and sank back luxuriously in his Morris-chair to consider.

First and foremost, what sort of a weird weapon had been used to kill the Philippine campaigner? What could have been dropped on his head that should vanish into thin air before the body was found?

Slowly and carefully he went over every detail of the evening, searching for something—anything that should furnish the clue he sought, but it was fruitless. Again he tried, and yet again, and drew blank. The overturned water pitcher on the balcony kept recurring to his mind, but he could not fit it into the problem.

Then the woman in the case, she who had telephoned. Had she been an accessory in the fact as well as an informer? Stockton considered this, smoking rapidly, and decided against it. Murder, especially that which is premeditated and by a person of brains, such as the one who had planned and executed those chalk-marks, is committed without accomplices if at all possible. There are such things as the turning of State's evidence and blackmail. Then since the woman had given the warning, she was very hardly an accomplice.

No, an accessory could be counted out, Stockton decided. Anyhow, that did not solve the mystery of the weapon.

Abandoning this line as fruitless, Stockton started on a new tack. The late captain had been afraid that something might fall on him. Did that argue knowledge of a danger that really threatened him from out of the air?

He had served as a soldier, probably as an officer as well—in fact, undoubtedly, since he held the rank of captain at his death—in Cuba, China, the Philippines. Stockton thought of the romance of Conan Doyle and smiled a little. Of course, this *might* be a case of the mysterious revenge of a heathen priestly sect for some real or fancied insult to its deities, but the young attorney was extremely sceptical. That was all right for romance, but reality limited the causes of murders considerably.

Cold-blooded, deliberately planned and executed murder with revenge as a motive is not common. Of course, if Junkin was the guilty man it would be a case of revenge; but Stockton doubted very much if he was. Then if there were no woman in the case—but there was the one who had telephoned. Well, aside from her, and Gifford had

been uncompromising about the captain's freedom from entanglements, there remained only one likely motive—gain. And that is the commonest of all.

But who would gain, and what of importance, from the captain's death?

The answer rather staggered Stockton, but he faced it. According to his niece, she was his only relative, and therefore would logically be his sole heir. Yet since he lived so quietly in two rooms in an unpretentious hotel, the captain must have been only moderately well off.

And, too, those slender footprints on the icy cornice ten stories above ground, they *might* have been made by a woman!

Stockton sprang to his feet, his unlit pipe clenched between his teeth, and paced the floor in some agitation. It was ridiculous, of course, but logic is logic. Then his better sense came to his rescue. How could Vida Fortesque have had anything to do with it when she was at home at the time, and when she was so well known in the hotel? The night clerk had addressed her by name, and certainly if she had been there that evening he would have mentioned it—and he, Stockton, would probably have seen her.

Well, then what?

He sat down again and filled his pipe afresh. This was getting him nowhere. He must start all over again.

Captain Fortesque had been killed by something that had been dropped on him. That was pretty certain. Also he had feared death in just that way. Which meant that he had had good reason to foresee his death, that he had enemies of whom he knew, or an enemy who would attack him from above——

Or did it mean that?

Suddenly the attorney sat erect, his eyes gleaming. Was he not getting cause and effect mixed? Wasn't it possible that the captain's fear, instead of being justified by his death, had *suggested* it? That some one who knew him well had planned and executed his murder in just the way he had feared it—*because* he had feared it? In other words, knowing that Fortesque was afraid of something falling on him, had the murderer dropped it on him?

That sounded reasonable! Then who knew him well enough to know of that fear?

Junkin, probably. Yes, but Vida Fortesque certainly did, since she had mentioned it!

Again the young man jumped up nervously to pace the room, and again his reason banished the ugly suspicion. If the girl had had any guilty knowledge of her uncle's death, she would never under any circumstances have mentioned his unusual fear to-night.

With an exclamation of disgust Stockton laid aside his pipe and prepared for bed. He would have to be up early, and it was already a good deal earlier than he liked to think of. Lack of rest is not conducive of clear thought.

He fell asleep still musing on the case, and through his dreams ran mysterious priests who flung daggers from mid-air, grotesque little men who loudly asserted their own importance, and two big, tragic, tear-wet dark eyes that looked up trustingly into his.

Stockton was aroused from a heavy, dreamless slumber by the persistent ringing of a bell. He sprang up, bewildered, threw on his bathrobe and stumbled sleepily to the door.

A grinning hall-boy, the color of chocolate, stood outside.

"'Scuse me, Misto Stockton, suh, but heah's yo' mawnin' papuh. Ah done reckon yo' all was 'periently goin' fo' to ovah-sleep, suh, an' Ah done ring de bell."

"Thanks, George," responded Stockton, rubbing his eyes. "What time is it, anyhow?"

"Neahly eight o'clock, suh."

With an exclamation the attorney snatched the newspaper and dived for his bathroom. He had suddenly recalled his appointment with Miss Fortesque at nine. Hardly an hour to shave and dress in!

He flung the paper on the table as he passed, and paused, much startled and very wide awake. For the paper had fallen spread out, and in big, black letters all across the front page was the answer to one, at least, of his problems of last night.

MYSTERY IN DEATH OF MILLIONAIRE!

screamed the paper, and Stockton paused to read the banks and then the body of the story. Here was the motive for Fortesque's murder!

Constructed after the approved newspaper style, with the most important information in the first paragraph, and the other facts following in order of their merit, the story set forth that Captain Josiah S. Fortesque, retired army officer, had been found dead beside his hotel with his skull crushed in, and that the owner of the hotel, Samuel Tolliver Junkin, and one of the elevator boys, Harry Johnson by name, had been arrested on suspicion of having murdered him.

Furthermore, as one of the newspaper's alert newsgatherers had discovered, the late captain was the sole heir of his brother, Ezekiel Fortesque of Oil City, Pa., who had died a millionaire some three years before.

The balance of the article dealt first with the mysterious chalk-marks, and next with the character of Junkin, of whom the reporter had made much in a delicately ironic vein. To conclude with, the article said that the police were not yet wholly satisfied that the murder had been solved and were still working on the case, and that new developments were looked for.

Stockton dropped the paper and hurried on to the bathroom. As he shaved he considered this new point.

So instead of being merely a moderately well-to-do person with little more than a pension to support him, Captain Fortesque had been worth a million dollars or more. A bait to tempt any crook who learned of it. And manifestly few persons knew that he was so well off.

Then who——?

Fortunately Stockton was using a safety razor. Miss Fortesque obviously would be aware of the fact, if anybody was. And equally obviously Junkin could not expect to benefit by murder. Then how about the man in the dark glasses?

Partly lathered as he was, Stockton went to the phone and got the Junkin Hotel on the wire. No, he was assured, Mr. Francis was not in, nor had any one seen him during the night.

"Is this Gifford?" he asked on an inspiration, and the voice at the other end of the wire answered that it was.

"This is Assistant District Attorney Stockton. I was asking you last night about Francis, as you may remember. Now listen, when you go off duty, leave word to the day clerk to have Francis arrested the moment he shows up—if he does. Any charge will do. Then get into touch with my office. Understand? And keep quiet about it."

He hung up, confident that his instructions would be followed, and went back to his shaving. He was pretty certain that this trap would net him nothing, but it was well to take no chances.

He was still mulling over the new development as he finished dressing; interrupting himself only twice, once to outline what he knew of Francis to his superior in the district attorney's office by telephone, and once to order his car. And the gist of his meditations was that there was nothing further to be done until he had more information to work on—until he had learned all he could from Vida Fortesque, in short.

Without stopping for breakfast, Stockton, clad immaculately in gray, stuck the sinister handkerchief in his pocket, jumped into the waiting automobile and gave the address of the Alhambra. And in something very like pleasurable excitement he waited for his second sight of Miss Fortesque, and his first by daylight.

Man-like, not realizing that the girl must appear in public within the hour, Stockton had pictured her in some sort of a charming negligée. Instead she was dressed in a dark tailored frock, the straight lines of which revealed a very pretty figure as she held out her hand to him in welcome at the apartment door. At the same time without actually being mourning, the dress gave that effect, which was heightened by the grave, quiet sadness of her face and eyes.

Her first words proved her hospitality.

"I know you haven't had any breakfast yet, Mr. Stockton," she said prettily, "and I had Auntie Vinie lay a place for you. Now *don't* say that you aren't going to taste some of her fried chicken and hot biscuit."

It was then that Stockton realized for the first time that Vida Fortesque was from the South.

He accepted with alacrity, and she took his hat and coat and laid them aside, while a huge and widely grinning mammy bobbed at him and bustled about setting the table in the tiny living-room.

Certainly if Miss Fortesque knew herself to be a millionairess she was not living up to the part. The apartment was charming and cheerfully sunny, but it was small. It was beautifully furnished with the inimitable touches that only a woman, and one of taste, can give to her home, but the materials used were inexpensive. And evidently Vida Fortesque and her colored mammy were the sole members of the menage. A small, upright piano and some music showed at least one of her hobbies.

The young man felt a little constrained as he sat down to the dainty and spotless table before heavenly coffee and crisp chicken and biscuits that fairly melted in his mouth. Seeing this, the girl proceeded at once to set him at ease; not realizing (and as he understood this Stockton heaved a great mental breath of relief) that his constraint was due to his own suspicions of her. From her light talk he gathered that her home was in Charleston, South Carolina; that she was an orphan, and that she had come up to New York on invitation of her uncle a couple of years before to cultivate her voice.

"But that was just an excuse, you know," she told him. "I haven't any voice to speak of. I really believe that poor Uncle J. just wanted to have me near him." She choked a little, blinked bravely, and continued: "He insisted on paying for my teachers, and he wasn't well off, either."

Stockton could not check an exclamation of amazement.

"Why, what is it?" she cried, startled.

"You mean to say you didn't know. Didn't you see the papers this morning?" He was trying to readjust himself.

"Oh, I couldn't bear to look at them, Mr. Stockton." She was distressed. "What has happened?"

"Do you know if your uncle left a will?"

She regarded him gravely. "I believe that he left everything to me," she said after a moment. Aunt Vinie had paused in the doorway of the kitchenette and was listening avidly.

"The papers say—at least one of them does—that he died a millionaire."

Slowly she laid down her coffee spoon and stared at him, wide-eyed. "A millionaire," she repeated, almost in a whisper. "Then I——" She was unable to go on. And Stockton was curiously pleased to note that the thought of the money seemed to give her no great pleasure; at least for its own sake. Himself the son of a Wall Street magnate, he had never known neither want nor idleness; he could yet understand the stunning importance to most people of the possession of great wealth.

The soft voice of Aunt Vinie cut in. "'Scuse me, boss, but what am dat, a millyumaire?"

"It means a very rich man," he explained, smiling. "A man worth a million dollars."

"Am dat mo' dan a thousan'?" she wanted to know further.

"It's a thousand times a thousand," he elucidated.

The old woman's face expanded into a wide, teeth-filled grin. "Lawsee!" she whooped. "Dar now, chile, ain't Ah done tole you de good Lawd 'ud pervide a way fo' you to git dat air tuckin'-comb you was lookin' at!"

"Aunt Vinie!" her mistress chided, smiling a little in spite of herself. And then to Stockton: "But—but I never dreamed—— How do they know?"

"His brother, Ezekiel Fortesque, left it to him. At least so the papers say."

"Uncle Zeke," she said slowly. "Why, I knew that he was doing pretty well in the oil-fields up North, but—a million dollars!"

"Miss Vidy, does yo' reckon Ah could have a black alpaca dress fo' de funeral?" inquired the negress eagerly. "Ah jes' loves mo'nin'!"

"Yes, Aunt Vinie, surely you can."

The old mammy shuffled out into the kitchenette, chuckling with delight. "De Lawd sho' am good to do po', mizzabul sinneh!" Stockton heard her exult, and smothered a smile in his coffee-cup.

Presently Miss Fortesque shook off her somewhat troubled mood and turned to more practical things. "Tell me, Mr. Stockton, has anything new developed in connection with—with what happened last night?" she asked.

Stockton drew the handkerchief from his pocket and he looked at it.

Stockton shook his head. "Junkin has been arrested, the proprietor of the hotel, you know; and so has one of the elevator boys. But I think that the man really to be suspected is a guest at the hotel, who has since disappeared—a man called James T. Francis. Do you know the name?"

She shook her head decidedly. "Is that the man you were asking me about last night?"

"Yes. He did not return to the hotel, and we found very little in his room when we searched it for a possible clue."

She was silent a moment. "Do you know, Mr. Stockton, there was something just a little familiar in your description of that man when I came to think it over," she said. "No, I couldn't think of a soul that would fit him, try as I might. Oh, dear, I wish Anthony were here! Maybe he would know who it is."

"Anthony?" Somehow Stockton was both vaguely uneasy and a little upset.

The girl turned a narrow gold ring that she wore on the third finger of her left hand, and Stockton's heart missed a beat and began to pound slowly and heavily. For the ring contained a fair-sized diamond. The bezel had been turned inside her hand.

"Anthony Whitcomb," she explained with a faint blush. "We are engaged."

The young man knew that he had gone very white, and fought for self-control. Suddenly, blindingly, he realized that he loved this girl whom he had seen but twice—loved her wholly and for all time; and now, it would appear, hopelessly as well. She had been lost to him before he had known of her existence.

He drank a glass of water and passed a hand over his forehead. And yet when he spoke he was astonished at the calmness of his voice.

"He isn't here, then?"

"No, he had to go down to the West Indies on a business trip about three weeks ago," she explained. Then rather hesitatingly: "The engagement hadn't been—my uncle didn't know of it. We were to have told him when Anthony—Mr. Whitcomb—got back. I got a post-card from him yesterday saying that he would be home in a couple of weeks more."

In matters of the heart women are keenly intuitive. Stockton could have sworn that he had betrayed himself in no way, yet suddenly the girl, whose serious dark eyes had been on him in a faint surprise, colored furiously and looked down at her plate.

To cover her embarrassment, the reason for which he, man-like, did not for a moment suspect, he glanced at his watch and rose.

"We will have to start at once, Miss Fortesque," he said quietly, but the pain in his voice did not escape her. "The inquest is set for ten o'clock, and it's nearly that now."

She did not look at him as she passed him, going to another room for her hat, but as she pinned it on and adjust a heavy veil before the mirror, she looked at herself. The wild-rose color was still in her cheeks.

"Poor boy!" she murmured. "I wonder, does he *really*——?"

Yet Vida Fortesque did not seem in the least offended. Women are like that.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AT THE INQUEST

TO the average person who has been fortunate enough never to have had to do with sudden death, there is something a little staggering in the phrase "The coroner's jury sat on the body," even though he knows that this is merely a figure of speech. It was something like this that caused Vida Fortesque to draw a breath of relief as she settled into a hard wooden seat after a hasty glance around the small room where the investigation into the cause of her uncle's death was being held.

There was no evidence of death there. The medical examiner, an elderly man with a bald head and a bored look, was listening to the technical statements of a surgeon who was on the stand. A dozen persons or so were in the little room; and most of them were policemen or from the police department. Otherwise there was a table with several bored reporters, some dingy pine railings, a sort of elevated desk where the medical examiner sat, a few rows of benches and some rather enervated air.

Dr. Potts, who bore a subtly triumphant mien, was questioning a surgeon witness as to the results of his examination, and was emphasizing, apparently, the exact condition of the cranium and cerebrum of the deceased. Presently the witness was excused, and Inspector Morgan was called.

He rattled off the usual formula concerning his name, place of residence and occupation, duly taken down by the busy stenographer; then after some other questions, Dr. Potts asked:

"Did you notice anything unusual in connection with the balcony outside the deceased's bedroom in the Junkin?"

Morgan hesitated a moment, looking puzzled, then replied in the negative.

"There was a water pitcher lying on the stone-work, was there not?" inquired the physician.

"Yes, there was," admitted the inspector.

"Did you notice anything in particular in connection with it?"

"It was lying on its side, and was frozen to the stonework," said the inspector, after some hesitation.

"Ah! And did that suggest nothing to you?"

"No, sir."

Stockton sat up, much interested. What did the doctor have up his sleeve?

"Do you recall the state of the weather yesterday?" pursued Dr. Potts.

"It was cold all day, followed by rain, and then, late at night, by frost again."

"Exactly. Mr. Morgan, are you aware of the fact that a tall building, such as the Junkin, acts as a chimney and produces a draft of considerable force at its top?"

"Why—I dunno, I guess so," said the witness, plainly a little out of his element.

"At all events when the late Captain Fortesque's door was opened it caused the window to slam?"

Stockton, aware of the largely informal nature of an inquest, spoke from where he sat. "I noticed that," he said. "I'm Robert Stockton, assistant district attorney."

"Good. Now, Inspector Morgan, supposing that a pitcher of ice-water had been set on the ledge of the open window of Captain Fortesque's bedroom in the Junkin Hotel in order to keep cool, and the door leading to the hall were opened, what might be the result?"

"The window would slam, and the pitcher would be knocked over," replied the inspector after cogitating.

"Exactly," purred the doctor. "And then what?"

Stockton saw what was coming, and tingled all over. The weapon! They had found the weapon—or had they?

"Why, I dunno," said Morgan blankly.

"You said that it was cold in the early part of the day," pursued the physician. "Suppose the pitcher had been upset when the late captain went out, thus creating a draft by opening his door. What would have happened?"

"Icicles!" exclaimed the inspector, brightening and looking startled at the same time. "It would make some icicles, and maybe one long one."

Here the medical examiner cut in. "I don't see just what you are driving at, Dr. Potts," he remarked querulously. "What have icicles to do with this case?"

"Everything, I believe, your honor," returned the doctor. "And what effect would the subsequent rain have on such an icicle, supposing there were but one?"

"Melt it," said Morgan, losing interest again.

"Or melt its base, its connection with the edge of the balcony, *causing it to fall*," said the doctor. "The height of the tenth floor of the hotel in question is a hundred and eighty feet, as I have ascertained. Would an icicle, falling from that height, reach the ground with sufficient velocity to cause the death of a man walking underneath, supposing it lit on his head?"

A subdued gasp went around the room, and the doctor smiled proudly. Stockton's fingers clutched the arms of the bench until the knuckles showed white. Another clue? Vida Fortesque shivered and wiped her eyes behind her veil.

"Do you mean that you believe Captain Fortesque to have lost his life in that manner?" demanded the examiner, becoming interested.

"I am merely suggesting it as a possibility," was the answer. "It may be the death was accidental; at all events this would solve the problem of the fact that no trace of a weapon was found on the scene of the captain's death. If it occurred as I have suggested, it was an accident, pure and simple, and due to the captain's own carelessness in putting the pitcher where it was found. For what part of the icicle was not melted by the heat of the deceased's body would have been dissolved more or less by the rain."

Again there was a stir in the small courtroom, and the blasé reporters, idling at their desks, brightened and began writing furiously.

Stockton got to his feet. He was shaking with excitement.

"Mr. Coroner," he cried, "I would like to request that this inquest be postponed until to-morrow morning."

"On what grounds?" asked the medical examiner, eyeing him none too favorably.

"The evidence just presented and deduced has given me a clue to the identity of the murderer of Captain Fortesque," replied the young man firmly, though he was by no means as sure of his ground as his words sounded.

"His murderer? Then you think this is murder?"

"I do," was the decided reply. "And I would prefer that the further evidence which would indicate this fact should be held in abeyance for the present."

In response to a gesture from the examiner he went up to the bench, and a low-voiced colloquy was held by these two, with Dr. Potts and Inspector Morgan. After a few minutes the examiner nodded.

"All those connected with the case of Captain Joshia S. Fortesque, deceased, are excused until to-morrow morning at ten o'clock," the medical examiner announced, and arose from his seat.

Too late Stockton remembered the reporters as he made his way back to Vida Fortesque's side. They came charging for him like a pack of hungry wolves, clamoring for a story, and he was very anxious that the girl should not be annoyed by them.

But Vida proved to be quick-witted. "Wait for me outside," he whispered quickly, and turned to face them. Obediently, and understanding him almost by intuition, it seemed, she got up and slipped unobtrusively from the room. He had just time for a lightning-swift regret that this splendid girl was not for him before he began to speak.

"Now, boys, you know how careful I've got to be not to say anything that will give the murderer warning when it comes out in the newspapers," he said, sparring for time. "Yes, I *have* an important clue, but it would ruin all chances of catching the man if I say too much."

"It *is* a man, then?"

"Who's the dame?"

"Can't you say something in a general way, you know?"

"Does it have anything to do with the chalk-marks?"

"Aw, loosen up, Stocky, you know us—*we* won't print nothin' that'll gum up your work."

He held up a hand for silence. "Have a heart!" he begged, laughing. "One at a time! Well, to begin with, that is Miss Vida Fortesque, the dead man's niece—— Say, wait a minute!" as one of the boys started in immediate pursuit of the girl. "She can't tell you anything—she was just called as being the only relative of the captain. Now, listen, I've got to make this short and snappy. You can say that she's very pretty, and all that——"

"Where does she live? We gotta get pictures!" exclaimed one youth eagerly.

For a moment Stockton was stumped; then he thought of Aunt Vinie. If he was any judge of character, she would dispose of these ravenous news-gatherers in short order. Meanwhile he would manage to keep Vida—that is, Miss Fortesque—away from her apartment until the danger was over. He could hardly repress a chuckle as he gave her address, the Alhambra, 139th street, which was promptly noted down by all pencils present.

"Now, listen, boys, get this. Here's the description of the man I believe committed the murder. Small man, big, dark glasses, unhealthy complexion, looks as though he just got out of the hospital, and oh, yes, a small black mustache. Claims to be a former city editor of a morning paper."

"Is that right?" exclaimed one of the reporters incredulously. "What paper?"

"Sorry, I don't know. You'll have to find out from Gifford, or the other employees at the Junkin. Now, listen, you'll keep that under your hats, won't you, boys? You can play up Miss Fortesque for your afternoon story."

"Of course!" he was assured in an emphatic chorus. And one of them wanted to know why this man was suspected.

"I can't tell you that now, boys, I'm sorry. His name—or the one he registered under at the Junkin—is James T. Francis."

Stockton smiled covertly as he waved aside a dozen other questions and made his way to the door. He knew that all the afternoon papers would contain a full description of this Francis; for sincere though each reporter might be, he would be both afraid that another would break faith and print the news, thus "scooping" him, and would be equally desirous of obtaining a "beat" himself. And the man wanted would be well pleased at the misleading information.

Out of the tail of his eye as he left the building he saw the reporters following him, and again he acted swiftly. Pausing for a split second at the door of the taxi in which sat the girl, well veiled, he muttered: "Quick—meet me at the Columbus Circle subway kiosk," and hurried for the nearest subway station. The car started up and was gone before the reporters could reach it.

Stockton caught an express train by the skin of his teeth, and walked forward a couple of cars, pushing through the usual crowds, just to be sure that he was alone. At the first express station he changed for a local, and had the satisfaction of being certain that he was not followed.

Short though the trip really was, it seemed to the impatient young man interminable. At last the train drew into the Fifty-ninth street station, and he hurried out and up the stairs to the street. There was no sign of girl or automobile.

He mounted the steps and leaned against the base of the Maine Memorial fountain to be conspicuous when she should arrive, and waited with what patience he could muster. He knew that the car would be longer on the way than he had been.

At last the girl arrived, and he got into his machine with her.

"Drive through Central Park for a while, George," he said to the chauffeur. "Now, Miss Fortesque, I'll tell you what I know."

She pushed back her veil. Her face was pale, but she was smiling a little. "You wanted to keep those reporters away from me, didn't you?" she asked softly. "Thank you, Mr. Stockton. I don't believe I could have borne to talk with them."

He was considerably startled at this voicing of his own earlier thoughts. "Why, how did you know?" he exclaimed. "I didn't say anything."

"I—I just knew," she said, evidently puzzled herself. "No, really, I'm not a mind-reader—at least I've never been one before."

For some obscure reason Stockton was unaccountably thrilled by her half-shy statement. It was as though this were a tie of some sort, linking them together; as though——

He brought himself up short. He was sitting beside a girl who was engaged to be married to another man, without doubt a worthy one; and he had no right whatever to think of her in any way but that of business.

"I hate to have to talk about it," he began abruptly, "but it may be that you can give me some important information if you know all that I know about your uncle's death. Do you mind if I go into details? They are bound to be unpleasant and painful."

"No, Mr. Stockton," she assured him quietly.

"Well, then, this is what happened last night, as nearly as I can figure it.

"You remember that I asked you if you knew anybody who wore dark glasses and looked sickly?"

She nodded.

"And this morning if you knew any one by the name of Francis? Well, about two weeks ago a man calling himself that got a room on the ninth floor of the Junkin Hotel. And I am firmly convinced that he is the man who killed your uncle."

He went on to describe the footprints he had found frozen in the light slush of the stone cornice, and leading from the room on the ninth floor. "I am sure that they

were this man's," he added. "He is small, and would naturally have small feet.

"For some reason this Francis desired the death of your uncle. I don't think that he wanted to kill him out of revenge, and by process of elimination I do believe that he knew of your uncle's riches and expected to benefit by them through his death."

"But even I didn't know until you told me that Uncle J. was—was a millionaire," she objected.

"I know, but the newspapers were able to find it out, don't you see? So some one else may have had that knowledge. Just how he expected to get the million, or any part of it, I have no means of knowing; that is to be discovered. Anyhow, I am certain that he did expect to do so. But enough of that for the present.

"This man was very clever, and wanted to cover his own tracks so completely that he would never be found out. He was disgusted, of course, and more than that I am certain that your uncle did not know him by sight, else he would never have dared to get a room in the same hotel. At the same time he evidently knew a great deal about your uncle, his personal habits, history, and so on. You'll see why in a minute.

"He knew that Captain Fortesque had spent years in the army. Therefore he would walk with the regulation army stride and at the regulation army speed—I don't remember just what they are now, and anyhow they don't matter; two and a half feet to a step or something like that, and so many steps per minute, you know. Also he knew of the fact that your uncle spent most of his spare time at the chess club, and could be expected home at a certain definite hour every evening. Am I boring you, Miss Fortesque? I'm really thinking this out loud as much for myself as for you."

"Not at all!" she protested. "I reckon I'm more interested than you are."

"Well, with this knowledge—and, by the way, you said that your uncle had a fear that something might fall on his head. Do you know why?"

She looked surprised. "Why, yes! Uncle J. was stationed in Montreal for three years or so, you know."

"Yes?" Stockton prompted.

"And he got the strange habit of walking close to the houses——" She paused, thinking deeply. "Now, *why* was that? I know he told me once. Oh, yes!" Suddenly she shivered, and stared at the attorney wide-eyed. "Isn't it strange, Mr. Stockton? The reason why he did that was because in Montreal most of the roofs have a sharp pitch—are very much sloped, you know. In the winter the snow and ice collect on them and when there's a thaw it slides off, and is apt to be dangerous for passers-by in the streets below. But owing to the slant of the roof it always falls to the outer side of the sidewalks, so that it's safer to walk near the buildings."

Stockton pursed his lips for a soundless whistle, his eyes gleaming.

"And from what the man said back there in the court-room, Uncle J. was killed by an icicle!" she finished in an awed tone. "Why, it's positively uncanny!"

"Not so much as you might think, Miss Fortesque," he returned, and his tone was very grim. "But let me tell you the rest." Rapidly he outlined his deductions of the chalk-marks on sidewalk and balcony, saying that they had probably been made at night. The murderer had without doubt experimented with a bit of putty and a piece of string, or the like, to find the exact spot for the initial cross-mark.

"I believe that Francis himself took that water-pitcher up by way of the fire-escape and laid it on its side so the authorities would deduce from it just what they did," he added. "Probably your uncle kept his window open a good deal."

"He was a fresh-air fiend," said the girl in a hushed voice.

Stockton went on to describe the murderer's probable movements, his trip up the fire-escape at the right moment and his dropping of—here the young man hesitated momentarily—"the icicle," he finished, "if that's what it was. One he had prepared beforehand." Then, he concluded, after dropping it, he had gone in through the window, out through Fortesque's door to the hall and so down to the lobby and out.

The girl shuddered violently. "You make it terribly real," she murmured, and hid her face for a moment. "Then what?"

"Why, then Francis simply walked downstairs and out, and vanished."

"Vanished? What do you mean?"

"He dropped his identity and disguise and became himself."

"But who is he?"

"That's for me to find out," said Stockton soberly. "I have little enough to go on—nothing but a laundry mark, in fact, and that may be no clue at all." He drew the crumpled and soiled handkerchief from his pocket as he spoke and spread it out gingerly.

Vida Fortesque shuddered at sight of the slight tinge of blood, and the young man explained how he had found it. It was very difficult to keep his mind on his work when every inch of his body was tingling with consciousness of her nearness.

"But what has that to do with it?" she asked.

"That I don't know," he confessed somberly. "Your uncle may have been killed by an icicle that fell accidentally—but then, how explain the chalk-marks and the footprints? He may have been killed as I have described it to you—but I'm not any too sure than an icicle was used."

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing an icicle is not very heavy. The slightest gust of wind would drive it completely out of its course in a fall like that. Then it might not fall straight, it might turn end for end and do no damage. And even if it did light point-down, wouldn't it just splinter and do no more than cause a slight wound?"

"That's true," she murmured.

"And if it *was* an icicle, would it have made so small a hole in your uncle's hat? I doubt it."

"But how else would the weapon have disappeared so strangely?" she questioned.

"I don't know," he confessed. "I'm completely at sea as to that. By the way, Miss Fortesque, do you recognize the laundry mark by any chance—KL-119?"

"I'm afraid not," she said, without turning her head, and he knew she was crying a little and felt like a brute. He put the handkerchief away.

"What do you intend to do now, Mr. Stockton?" she asked after a moment.

"Get you home first," he told her with forced cheerfulness. "I guess the reporters have gone by now."

"The reporters?" she exclaimed, alarmed, and he explained his quandary and his decision to let Aunt Vinie handle them.

She was smiling once more, though wanly. "I reckon she'll do it all right," she agreed. "Then what will you do?"

"Find out what laundry that mark belongs to and whose number this is; then there will be an arrest, and the case will be ended." And to the chauffeur he said. "Shoot out to Central Park West now, and go to 139th street—the Alhambra."

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TRAIL GETS WARM

AUNT VINIE met them at the door, her broad black face wreathed in smiles and her stout form shaking with chuckles. At the same time Stockton sensed an undercurrent of doubt, like a child who has just done something out of the ordinary and is not certain whether he will be praised or scolded for it. The young man had dismissed his machine and gone up with Vida because there was another question he had still to ask her, and he had not liked to do it in the auto when she was so wrought up.

"Ah done fix dem air highf'lutin' mens from de printin'

papers," Aunt Vinie announced with great satisfaction as she ushered the two into the living-room, now neatly put in order. "Comin' pesticatin' longer me 'bout givin' 'em yo' pitchers, Miss Veedy, and you a millyumaire! Ah tell you-all Ah done tole 'em to go on 'bout dey business an' leave us 'lone!"

"So you routed the reporters, Aunt Vinie?" asked Stockton, laughing.

"Ah don' know 'bout no 'po'tahs, boss," said the old woman with vigor. "But dem po' white trash what come up yere makin' a big 'miration 'bout how purty Miss Veedy is, Ah done sent 'em skally-hootin' back wha dey come from, you heah *me!*"

"Well, you certainly did mighty well to get rid of them without giving them any information," the young man declared.

"Who, me, boss? Ah ain't give 'em nuffin' 'cep' Miss Veedy's pitcher what was settin' up dere on de pianny——"

"What?" exclaimed the girl, looking at the empty frame. "Why, Aunt Vinie, you never gave them——"

"No, Miss Veedy, no, *suh*, Ah ain't give hit to 'em. Ah jes' loant hit an' de young gennleman done promus he'd sen' hit right back," explained the negress earnestly. Stockton's jaw had fallen a little, and he wasn't sure whether to laugh or be vexed. Vida, too, was evidently in a mixture of moods.

"An' de man what loant hit is quality folks, *he* is, an' from de Souf, jes' like we-uns, Miss Veedy. He says to me, he says: 'Aunty, ain't yo'-all from V'ginny?' Ah say, 'No, boss, Ah's a Fo'tesque from Souf Ca'liny,' an' he say, 'Why, ain't dat funny, Ah was bo'n in Cha'leston masself!' an' man, suh, Ah could have jes' flung my ahms 'roun' his neck an' kissed him right smack on de mouf! An' den he up an' say—hee, hee!—'how'd you-all like fo' to have yo' pitcher in de printin' paper, aunty?' an' befo' Ah could open mah mouf he done pint a little box at me an' done snap-shooted me wid hit—he-e!—an' den he say: 'Aunty, yo'-all betteh lemme have a pitcher of Miss Veedy, 'cause 'twouldn't be comp'ny manners fo' you to be in de paper an' not her,' an' 'co'se den Ah done loant hit to him, Miss Veedy, an' we's gwine bofe be in togedder!"

Vida stared a moment, then broke down and laughed hysterically.

"Oh, Aunt Vinie, you'll be the death of me yet!" she gasped at last. And to Stockton, who was grinning himself, "I don't suppose it really matters, they'd have got one sooner or later in any event."

He nodded soberly enough, and Aunt Vinie went off into the kitchenette, still chuckling.

"There's just one question I want to ask you, Miss Fortesque, before I start on a hunt for the owner of that handkerchief," said the young man.

"How in the world are you going to find the laundry?" she exclaimed. "It's worse than the proverbial needle in the haystack."

"I know that," he admitted ruefully. "I'll have to find out from a laundry man if there is any regular classification of those marks they use. That will be a starter anyhow."

"Do you suppose the letters are the initials of the man who runs the laundry?" she suggested thoughtfully.

He stared a moment. "By George, I believe you've hit it!" he cried. "That would narrow down the search considerably—I could take only such laundries as have those initials. I wonder if you're right?"

"Do you know the name of your own laundry?" she asked, unfastening her heavy fur coat and taking off her gloves.

"Yes, the Peerless, run by a man named Jacobs."

"Then look at the laundry-mark on your collar and see if it checks up," she suggested and smiled at his scandalized face.

"Oh, but I couldn't do that——" he began, turning red.

"This is no time for splitting hairs, Mr. Stockton," she reminded him. "I'll be back in a minute." She flung him a sad little smile and went into the next room.

Stockton hesitated, then whipped off tie and collar. When she came back a minute later, minus the big coat, he was just adjusting his pin again. He nodded.

"SJ—8288," he said. "Sol Jacobs. Well, that's a starter."

"You wanted to ask me a question?" she reminded him.

"Oh, yes. It's important, too. Last night and again to-day I described to you the man Francis, the man who undoubtedly murdered your uncle. But I told you that I was certain he was disguised, and pretty thoroughly.

"Now, on the basis that he would try to look exactly the opposite of the way he actually looks, I'm going to describe him to you as he probably is, and see if it is any one you can think of."

"Oh, that's clever, Mr. Stockton!" she cried eagerly, sitting alertly on a chair.

"Well, something like this, then." Stockton also sat down, hat still in hand, and considered, his eyes half-shut, concentrating on the picture. "He would be a young man of not over thirty, somewhat slight of figure, but erect and vigorous of carriage and athletically inclined. Probably of good stock; anyhow, hands and feet small and aristocratic-looking. He would have light-brown or fair hair, would be healthily sunburned, clean-shaven——"

There was a smothered exclamation from the girl. Stockton looked up at her as he ended, "and very keen, bright eyes—why, Miss Fortesque, what's the matter?"

For Vida was standing, both hands clutched at her breast, swaying back and forth, her eyes wide and glassy.

"Oh, God, not that—not *that!*" she moaned, and before he could reach her she had crumpled up in a dead faint on the floor.

"Aunt Vinie, come here, quick!" cried the young man as he picked the girl up and laid her on a sofa.

"What de matter, boss?" exclaimed the old woman, shuffling in from the kitchen regions. Then as she saw her mistress, "oh, ma Lawdy, white man, what you done done to ma honey-lamb?"

"She's fainted," he ejaculated. "Get some water."

"Go 'way from heah!" cried the old mammy indignantly. "Honey chile, what dey done done to you?" She gathered the still form into her powerful arms. "What dey done to ma baby, eh?"

Presently the girl stirred, moaned and opened her eyes. At once a look of horror came into them, and she burst into a very storm of weeping. Oh, Aunt Vinie, I wish I were dead—I wish I were dead!" she cried over and over, and Stockton, very much shaken, his heart aching for her, tiptoed softly to the door and went out, leaving the negress to her ministrations.

Evidently he had found a clue, only to lose it again, he thought grimly, as he made his way down in the elevator and to the street. Vida Fortesque undoubtedly knew now who the murderer was, but was in no condition to tell him or anybody else. Well, there yet remained the laundry-mark to follow up, and time might be precious.

It was past his usual lunch hour by now, but Stockton did not think of it. He turned into the nearest place bearing the "Booth Telephone" sign and selected the classified business directory.

The result was rather staggering. In the first place there were fully a hundred laundries beginning with L; and in the next many of these and others were mere titles —"The Luxury Laundry," "Lincoln Hand Laundry," and so forth. Also several of exactly the same name had different addresses—evidently chain stores. There was none that fitted the "KL" on the linen strip.

The next thing to do was to visit a laundry in search of information. Its Dutch proprietor was at first inclined to be suspicious and taciturn, but accepted a cigar and the young man's business card as evidence enough of good faith.

"Dey ain't no regular system mit dese laundries," he elucidated, rolling the cigar around in his mouth and spurring on his assistants with an eagle eye. "Some uses one way an' some a different one. Nu, by me a mark makes it like dis——" With practised fingers he drew a weird hieroglyphic on a piece of wrapping paper in indelible ink. "Dot's *gimmel daleth yod*, different already by der others what there is. Maybe dere's fifty what's

got like my name—should I know?—but effery time I see dis mark I know I don't lose a customer."

"Do you know any of the other marks?" asked the attorney, hopefully.

"You bet!" affirmed the man. "Most of de ones near here. What one you want?"

Stockton drew the handkerchief from his pocket, and he looked at it.

"Hm. KL. Yep, I know dot. It's A. Einstein's place what he calls it a laundry ofer by 133d street near Broadway, and de stuff dot man ruins mit his acids—oh, it's fierce!"

Stockton thanked the proprietor; assured him that he would not be required as a witness; explained that his own neighborhood was much farther downtown and that he had no thought of changing from his present laundryman, whose work was sufficiently satisfactory.

"Sol Jacobs is a robber, take it by me!" the man warned him fervently, and finally escaped.

At the Ne Plus Ultra Hand Laundry at the address indicated, run by A. Einstein as he soon discovered, Stockton met with a new check.

Yes, the business-like girl clerk admitted, KL was their mark, and the number referred to the customer—would serve to identify him, in fact. But the number was not complete.

"We've been in business here a long time," the young woman explained, "and we don't ever duplicate our numbers." She got down a dusty ledger from a shelf and showed the attorney the entry opposite the number 119. It was "Mrs. Joseph T. Crosby," and an address.

"This is the ledger for 1899," said the clerk, "and Mrs. Crosby has been dead for five or six years."

"Then what does this mean?" exclaimed the young man, crestfallen.

"Simply that the whole of the number isn't there," was the reply. "The rest of it's cut out, don't you see?"

Stockton saw. When the automobile had run over the square of crumpled linen the chain had literally stamped out pieces of the cloth, obliterating all but the first three figures of the number.

"Our newest customers run up in the twelve thousands," said the girl, eyeing him with covert approval and patting a stray lock of hair into place. If this is a fairly good customer he may be eleven hundred and ninety-something; or if a new one eleven thousand nine hundred and something. You see?"

Stockton rubbed his chin, baffled.

"Would you know the name if you saw it?" asked the clerk helpfully.

"I'm afraid I wouldn't," returned the young man. "And as there would be an even hundred names to go through and my time is limited—well, if I get another clue, I'll try it," and he walked out.

It was then that he realized the emptiness of his inwards, and sought the first restaurant he saw to feed the inner man and mull over the set-back. His thoughts turned promptly to Vida Fortesque, and he spent some minutes worrying about her.

Then as a natural corollary he thought of the cause of her sudden fainting spell. Whom had he described by sheer, blind reasoning and guess-work that could cause her so much pain and sorrow? *Who was the murderer?*

And suddenly, blindingly, the answer came to him. It was such a simple thing, so obvious that he cursed himself for having failed to think of it before. His first impulse was to rush to the nearest police-station and send an alarm out broadcast; then another thought came to him, and he dropped back into his seat again with something very like a groan.

It was so plain now, so plain!

Who would benefit by Captain Fortesque's death, aside from his immediate heir and niece?

Since she had no relatives, whose danger would cause the most pain to Vida Fortesque?

The answer to both questions was the same: her future husband.

No wonder the poor girl had been so upset when he described the man so accurately! And it was just this fact that made Stockton pause.

Since Vida was engaged to the man, she must love him. Since she loved him, she would want to protect him.

But since, he, Robert Stockton, hitherto more or less heartwhole and fancy free—well, the situation had to be faced, and he faced it in grim stoicism—since he loved Vida himself, it was his duty to protect her and, on her behalf, this man.

"Anything wrong, sir?" asked a solicitous waiter, coming up soft-footedly to stand by his side.

"Eh? What's that?" he asked blankly.

"Anything wrong—isn't the portion all right?" persisted the man, scenting a vanishing tip.

"Oh—the food. Take it away. No, it's all right; I've just lost my appetite. Bring me some strong black coffee."

The waiter vanished, and Stockton went back to his thoughts.

But then, *if* this man—what was his name? Oh, yes, Anthony Whitcomb—if this Whitcomb was really *alias* Francis, were the murderer, then he was not worthy of the girl. Why, he was a crook, a villain of the deepest dye—a fortune-hunter, a blackguard! She must be protected from him at all costs! Even in the face of her own resistance.

The waiter set his coffee before him.

But *was* he the man?

Again Stockton thought, stirring the coffee slowly. There was one way to settle the matter, and swiftly—unless, of course, the man used more than one *alias*—that would be by inquiring for him under his own name at that laundry. He might use a different one, but Stockton decided against this. He would undoubtedly receive mail and telephone calls at his home, wherever that was, and if he were playing a deep game, he could not afford to run any risks.

No, if Anthony Whitcomb were the customer listed as KL—119, and whatever the balance of the number was, they would know him by that name at the Ne Plus Ultra Laundry.

Stockton beckoned imperatively to the anxious waiter, thrust a bill into his hand, grabbed his hat and overcoat and hurried out. A belated sense of duty neglected demanded that he call up the office first, then he would go to the laundry around the corner and settle the matter definitely.

But as he sought a telephone booth again he found himself thinking more and more strongly of Vida. "He was worried about her—he wanted to protect her against—against whatever threatened her——

He drew up, so to speak, a little surprised at his thoughts. She was in no danger that he knew of; then why this curious feeling that was becoming stronger every moment? It was like a premonition of danger. She needed him—he knew it!

Instead of calling the office he snatched the directory, found the number of the Alhambra and asked for it in a voice that shook a little.

CHAPTER NINE

NANNETTE LE CLAIRE

VIDA was pacing up and down her apartment, twisting and rolling a damp scrap of lace handkerchief into a hard little ball, her eyes wide and tragic and her face white and tear-stained. Aunt Vinie was puttering around the room making a pretense of straightening it up and glancing from time to time with a mixture of fear and curiosity at an open telegram lying on the table. She would have given her eye-teeth, had they still remained, for her "readin' glasses"—in other words, an ability to read, even though the yellow thing meant no good. A telegram never does to the Southern darky.

"Oh, Aunt Vinie, I wish he'd come!" exclaimed the girl for about the tenth time, her voice breaking.

"Honey, does yo'-all 'spec' yo' gwine marry dat white

man when yo' done gone an' got yo'se'f pregaged to dat Mistah Ant'ny, which Ah ain't never had no use fo' nohow sence Ah done foun' he couldn't look yo' straight in de eye when he was drinkin' a glass of watah?"

Vida stopped short and stared at her indignantly. "Certainly not!" she exclaimed. "Aunt Vinie, I wish you wouldn't say things like that!"

"Well," said the old mammy defensively, "yo'-all don't need to get so uppity 'bout hit. Dat young lawyer-man's quality folks, *he* is."

"I know it, Vinie," said the girl softly, and resumed her pacing. "I reckon he's a friend to us, and I need a friend just now if ever I did."

"Den how come yo' done took off dat pregagement-ring?"

Vida glanced with both pain and horror at the diamond that gleamed on the table. "I—oh, Aunt Vinie, I'll tell you some other time. Oh, isn't Mr. Stockton *ever* going to call up his office?"

The telephone bell jangled suddenly, and the girl started as though shot. She made a move to take it, then drew back. "Answer it, Vinie, will you? And find out who is calling before you say whether I'm here or not!"

The old woman took up the telephone awkwardly. "Hello!" she shouted. "Who dat? Huh? Hit's de young lawyer-man, Miss Veedy."

Vida snatched the telephone with a gasp of thankfulness. "Oh, Mr. Stockton," she cried into the transmitter. "I'm *so* glad you called up! Did you get my message?"

"Why, no!" Stockton's voice held a note of surprise.

"Didn't they tell you at the district attorney's office that I'd called?"

"I haven't been there yet, nor called them up," he said. "I just had a queer feeling that you needed me."

"Oh, I do, I do!" cried the girl hysterically. "Can you come here at once, please? Something dreadful has happened."

"Be there in five minutes," he promised instantly, and rang off. The laundry could wait.

In hardly more than the prescribed time he had reached the apartment house, breathing heavily, for he had run most of the way. Vida herself opened the door and all unconsciously gave him both her hands.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed, consumed by a desire to take her into his arms and soothe her fear. To his horror she burst into tears.

"There, there, little girl," he soothed her awkwardly, patting her on the shoulder, while Aunt Vinie looked on for a moment from the doorway of the kitchenette in marked approval. Then she disappeared.

The girl's paroxysm was quickly over, and she looked up, dabbing her eyes, coloring a little and essaying a trembling smile.

"You must think me a big cry-baby, Mr. Stockton," she said, "but I've had a good many shocks within the last few hours. Sit down, and I'll tell you as best I can."

He took a chair and she seated herself on the sofa, twisting and untwisting the scrap of handkerchief and looking down at the floor. She was silent for a long moment, and Stockton had time to see the telegram and the ring on the table. His firm lips tightened and his jaw thrust forward. He was right, then! But what else had occurred?

"Oh, it's so terrible, Mr. Stockton!' she burst out at last, looking up at him in agony of shame and horror. "You described this morning the man you believe killed poor Uncle J. and it was—it was——"

"Anthony Whitcomb," he ended for her gently. "I know — I guessed it!"

"You know?" she cried, staring.

He nodded, all commiseration.

"And—have you——?"

She sprang up in uncontrollable agitation and began pacing the floor.

"No. I said I knew, Miss Fortesque, but frankly it's still nothing but guess-work. There are a lot of things that need explaining."

"Then you haven't the actual proof?" There was a very curious mingling of emotions in Vida Fortesque's tone.

"No, but I can get it easily. If it's he, the laundry will know. I haven't been there yet, but I intend to go there when I leave here."

"But he isn't in the city!" she cried. "Oh, it's *so* strange! I told you that he was down in the West Indies, and this morning I got that lettergram there from him. He sent it last night—it's dated from Richmond at ten o'clock, and he'll be here this afternoon as soon as he gets in."

Stockton studied his fingernails a moment, two deep creases between his eyes. "Miss Fortesque," he said then, "was the fact of his resembling the hypothetical picture I drew of what Francis really looks like the only reason for your having been so upset this morning?"

"No," she whispered, "it wasn't. There has been some-

thing strange about Mr. Whitcomb ever since I've known him——"

"How long is that?" he interrupted.

"About six months."

His eyebrows went up a little, and the girl colored painfully.

"I met him through friends in Charleston," she explained steadily. "He brought letters of introduction. He had been an aviator for the Allies over in France and had been wounded, and he—he was the only young man I knew in New York, aside from my uncle."

"Yes?" he prompted her gently.

"Well, he'd asked me just the questions you did about Uncle J., only a great many more besides. I remember telling him all about uncle's peculiar fear of something falling on him from a roof—he asked me particularly about that! He didn't want to meet uncle or let him know of our—our engagement until he was in a better position to support a wife. That was to have been after his trip to the West Indies. He expected to clean up a good deal of money in a sugar deal. He went by boat, and I got letters and postals from him from several places—Bermuda, Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, and so on——" She hesitated.

"Yes?" he said again.

"But although I wrote him several times he didn't answer my letters; and two of them came back undelivered. Of course he was traveling around down there," she added, "but it seemed a little odd that he didn't leave any forwarding address. And yesterday I got a postal, as I told you, which said that he would be here in another fortnight. That was dated from Porto Rico. Then the next thing was this night letter." She nodded toward the table. "Of course there really isn't anything much to that, but all along I've had a sort of intuition that he didn't really lo—care for me," she ended distressfully.

Stockton had an impulse to ask, "And you?" but refrained. He had a wild hope that the engagement had been the outcome of fascination and romance, and didn't want to spoil it by stern reality. Sometimes hope is best.

"So he wrote from Porto Rico, and you heard from him next from Richmond," he said instead. "Nothing in between, and he's coming two weeks sooner than he expected. Also Jacksonville, Florida, is about thirty-six hours from New York, and that would be his first stop on his way from the Indies. H'm! May I see that telegram?"

She nodded readily, and he took the yellow message.

> Will reach new york tomorrow afternoon plans have been changed trip wholly successful have some lovely presents for you dear from the beautiful southland am wild with anxiety to see you and to meet your dear uncle we shall certainly visit bermuda together have something too for vinie with much love. ANTHONY.

"H'm," Stockton muttered again, studying it. "Exactly fifty words, and——" Suddenly he stiffened and his nostrils dilated. He turned to the girl with a face gone so grim that she was startled.

"This telegram is a fake!" he cried, his eyes gleaming. "Look here, those are regular typewriter capitals. All New York telegraph stations are equipped with machines having a special square block capital letter without ornaments or spurs! This wasn't written on a telegraph typewriter at all!"

"Then——" Vida was unable to go on.

"Then he may have been in New York last night and for the past two week! Listen, you say this was delivered—when?"

"Just after you left." The girl was breathing quickly and her little hands were tightly clenched.

"But night letters are always delivered the first thing in the morning. Did you notice anything about the messenger boy?"

"It wasn't a boy, it was a girl. Just a regular telegraph girl in uniform."

"Probably bribed to deliver this message. H'm! Did you sign for it?"

"Why, no, I didn't!" exclaimed the girl excitedly. "She didn't ask me to, and I was too much upset to think."

"That settles it, then," declared the young man, rising. "May I use your phone for a minute?"

"Surely," said Vida, and he took the telephone book and ran through it rapidly. Presently he nodded and called a number.

"Hello, this Einstein's laundry? I was asking an hour or so ago about a handkerchief bearing your laundry mark. Yes. Well, would you mind looking up the number of Anthony Whitcomb, who lives at—wait a moment." He turned to Vida, and she supplied the number quickly, one in West 130th street. Her eyes were very bright, and twin spots of color burned in her cheeks.

Stockton repeated the number, and waited. "Hello? It's KL 11928? Sure of that? Thank you very much."

He hung up the receiver and faced the girl. "You heard? It's he, beyond question."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, grief and anger and hurt pride struggling for mastery in her look and tone. "Then he was only after my money—he's a—a *murderer!* He killed my only relative—for *that!* Oh, God!"

Stockton turned away, unable to watch her, his fingers itching to be at the throat of the man who had treated her like this. To cover her emotion he reached for the telephone, intending to call his office, and headquarters. The bell rang sharply just as he picked it up.

"Answer for me please, will you, Mr. Stockton?" the girl asked in a muffled tone. Her back was toward him and she was staring unseeingly out of a window. "I hope it isn't—that man."

He did so, and turned. "A lady to see you, Miss Fortesque."

"A *lady?*" exclaimed the girl, turning. Her eyes were suspiciously red, but already she had regained a measure of composure. "I can't see any one. Who in the world could it be?"

Stockton turned back to the phone. "Won't she give her name?" he asked of the colored boy in the lobby.

"No, sah, she say she got to see Miss Fo'tesque 'bout her gittin' married."

The lawyer's eyes lighted. Swiftly he repeated the words. "Won't you see her?" he asked. "It may be very important."

"Certainly!" exclaimed the girl, alert at once. She dabbed at her eyes again before the mirror, while Stockton told the boy to send the lady up. He waited a few moments, and then lifted the receiver again.

"You won't be able to get a number until Williams gets back to the switchboard, Mr. Stockton," said the girl, busy with a minute powder-puff. "He runs the elevator as well."

The young man hung up the receiver and waited. Could this by any chance be the woman of the mysterious warning?"

Presently the door-bell rang and Aunt Vinie shuffled out from the kitchen to answer it. She ushered in a handsome young woman with masses of copper hair, and clothing that was the very latest word in style. Her pretty face was marred by a slight hardness around the eyes and mouth.

The two women sized each other up for a moment while Vinie went back to the kitchen, muttering to herself.

"Miss Fortesque?" asked the young woman, and Stockton's eyes narrowed. It was the same voice as that of the night before, though now under better control.

Vida inclined her head.

"I wanted to see you about something pretty particular," pursued the young woman, shifting a small dog to her other arm and glancing at the young man.

"This is"—a warning glance caused the girl to change what she was about to say—'Mr. Stockton, a friend of mine."

But that was just what the assistant district attorney had wanted to keep under cover. The young woman started violently and lost some of her color. She seemed about to beat a retreat, but Stockton held up his hand.

"I know your voice," he said quietly. "Why did you telephone me last night? And what did you wish to tell Miss Fortesque? You'd better come through—it will mean certain arrest as an accessory if you don't."

But it took a great deal of argument, persuasion and even threats to induce the young man to tell what she knew. She wasn't a squealer, she declared, and did not propose to begin now. Finally, however, when Stockton explained what a mesh of circumstantial evidence and direct proof ensnared Anthony Whitcomb, she sighed and capitulated. It was plain that she wanted to clear her own skirts and at the same time relieve her mind.

Her rather bold eyes appraised Vida again, and she nodded. "He wasn't stuck on you, though," she remarked. "You ain't his kind."

"What do you mean?" asked Vida, coloring.

"You'll know in a minute." The young woman settled her dog more comfortably. "Well, then, I'm Nannette Le Claire. Last spring Tony Whitcomb met me at the Doch-an-Doroch, where me and Duke was doin' a singin' and dancin' turn in the cabaret. Duke 'll get me sure if he finds out I've squealed. Well, he put it up to me, me not bein' married or anything, what would I give him if he got me a knock-down to an honest-to-Gawd millionaire, provided the gink came through with the wedding-bells thing."

"If he married you," Stockton translated for Vida's benefit.

"That's what I said. I told him I didn't know, and he said he'd do it for twenty-five grand flat."

"Twenty-five thousand dollars!" exclaimed the attorney. Vida turned her face away for a moment.

"I said all right—gee, who wouldn't?" Miss Le Claire continued, "and he wised me up. He'd got a line on a guy that had inherited a million from his brother, but was keepin' quiet about it—a little nutty, I guess. 'Scuse me, Miss Fortesque, I forgot I was talkin' about your uncle."

"My uncle!" exclaimed the girl, horrified.

"Oh, it was all right, perfectly on the level and all that. So he got me an introduction through a friend of his, but there was nothin' doin'—the old gent couldn't see *any* woman, let alone yours truly."

"Well, that havin' blew up, and me not carin' much anyhow, Tony and Duke got their heads together and decided on a new stunt. I got it out of Duke later. Tony, who's a real gent himself and comin' of a good family and all that, was to meet you, Miss Fortesque, and marry you. Then when your uncle cashed in he'd come in for a fat share of the million, you bein' his only heir and relative."

"Oh!" gasped the girl, going white to the lips. She sprang up in uncontrollable agitation and began pacing the floor. "Oh!" she cried again, and Stockton's fists clenched in sympathy for her. "What a *horrible* thing!"

"That ain't the worst of it," the young woman went on, a shade of pity in her eyes. "Only get me straight. I didn't know a thing about it till last night. I may sing and dance in the almost in a cabaret, and maybe St. Pete will have to do some fixin' up in the big ledger before he'll let me through the pearly gates, but I balk at murder, among a few other trifles; and that's flat."

Stockton nodded. "So that's why you called me up last night?"

"That's why." She stroked the somnolent dog and glanced again at Vida, who was standing by the window. "I knew about their bein' engaged and all, and then three weeks ago Duke told me that him and Tony was goin' on a trip to Bermuda and around down there on business. I didn't think nothin' of it then, for Tony Whitcomb always was a foot-loose sort of a guy. He was an Ace in the flyin' corps over in France, you know, and it seemed to make him pretty free-and-easy in a way. He's a wild devil, if ever there was one.

"Well, night before last I was gettin' home from a friend's, goin' to the subway—I been restin' for a couple of weeks—when I saw a feller I thought I knew ahead of me. I walked faster (this was up in the Nineties) and in a minute I made Tony. He didn't see me, though. And he was all dolled up in black goggles and a dinky little Charlie Chaplin mustache.

"Well, that got my goat right off the bat. I says to myself, 'What's he camouflagin' himself like that for, and why ain't he down South like he's supposed to be?' So little Nannette does the pussy-foot thing and follows him to the Junkin."

Stockton nodded encouragingly as the girl paused. "Go on," he said. "You did quite right." Vida had turned and was listening wide-eyed from the window.

"Of course I knew your uncle lived in the Junkin," pursued Miss Le Claire, "but it took me a while to dope it out. I kept askin' myself what his little game was, and finally I made it.

"I knew from things he's said when he'd an edge on" —Stockton did not translate this; Vida had had enough to trouble her—"that Tony had killed so many men over the big war that he didn't think any more of another guy's life—or his own, either—than he did of a second-hand toothpick. And then I got wise, or partly. He was aimin' to bump off friend uncle so he'd come in for the million a few sooner!"

"Oh!" gasped Vida again, and hid her face.

"Well, that's all," said the young woman, getting up to go. "As soon as I figured it out I called up the district attorney's office, not wantin' to tip off the police if I could help it; but it was near ten o'clock then, and there wasn't anybody there. A detective told me that you lived the nearest to the Junkin of any of the assistants, so I called you up, Mr. Stockton. Only I was too late."

"Yes," he said gravely; "you were by a few minutes."

The girl caught her breath and her lip trembled for a moment. "I'm sorry," she said then. "I—I kind of liked Captain Fortesque—he could see through me," and she turned to the door.

"Wait a moment," exclaimed the attorney. "Why did you come here now?"

"I wanted to tip off Miss Fortesque to the kind of guy she was goin' to get hitched to," said the young woman. "I had a rotten husband myself once. He's dead now. I wasn't going to squeal on Tony about last night, though; I ain't that kind. Now, Mr. District Attorney, can I go?"

"Will you give me your address, please?" Stockton was beginning, when the telephone rang once more. Again Vida motioned for him to answer, and again he lifted the receiver.

"Hello?" he said. And then in a tone of such suppressed excitement that both girls stared at him, "Oh! Wait a moment."

He covered the mouth of the transmitter and turned, his eyes glittering and his lips parted in a thin, ominous smile.

"It's Whitcomb," he said.

CHAPTER TEN

THE SHOW-DOWN

NANNETTE LE CLAIRE was the first to speak. "My Gawd!" she cried. "Tony? He mustn't find *me* here!"

But Vida rose to the emergency. "Go into the bedroom," she directed swiftly. "Here's your muff. Wait till he's gone—if he comes up."

The young woman vanished in a whirl of skirts, her dog yapping excitedly, and the door closed behind her. Vida, terror in her wide, dark eyes, turned to Stockton, who was talking in a low voice, but clearly and rapidly, into the phone.

He hung up the receiver and looked at her, his face set and grim. "I told the hall-boy to bring him up," he said quietly. "There's no other way."

"Oh, what shall I do?" she cried. "I'm afraid!"

"I'll be right here," he soothed her. "Let me take charge. This is a desperate man that we have to deal with now, you know; or he will be if he suspects for a moment what I—what we know. Oh, Aunt Vinie!"

The old negress shuffled out from the kitchen. Yas, boss, Ah' heah."

"Listen, Aunt Vinie. Mr. Whitcomb will be up in a moment. As soon as you let him in, go out in the hall and tell William, the elevator boy, to get a policeman as quick as he can. Understand?"

"Lawsee, boss!" she gasped, her eyes rolling in terror. "De *perlice?* Who dey gwine arrest?"

"The man who killed Miss Vida's uncle. And then come right back. Will you do it?"

"Yas, boss, Ah'll do hit. But lawsee, hit sho' am turrible de gwines on in dis yere place—ooh! Dar he!" The door-bell had rung.

Swiftly Stockton glanced about for a weapon of any sort, for he knew that he had to do with a dangerous man who almost certainly was armed. But there was nothing in sight, and no time to search the little kitchen.

"Follow my lead," he told Vida in a low voice, "and don't let him suspect anything—I'm your uncle's attorney."

Aunt Vinie had opened the door, and a clear, vibrant, musical voice was speaking. At the sound of it Vida shuddered slightly.

"Why, hel-lo, Aunt Vinie! Didn't expect to see me so soon, eh? Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Howdy, Mistah Ant'ny, suh! Miss Veedy's 'spectin' yo'-all," exclaimed the old woman, her voice trembling ludicrously. "Ah's—Ah's jes' gwine out in de hall to tell dat fool niggah—hey, you Willyum!" and she charged past into the hall.

The visitor came in, and from where he sat Stockton studied him keenly. He saw a man of perhaps thirty years, of rather less than medium height, but with energy and wiry strength showing in every move. His hair was light-brown and curly, and his eyes were a very keen, bright blue. He was clean-shaven, with a thin, strong, lightly tanned face and when he smiled he showed a set of small, even and very white teeth. The sort of man who finds it easy to dupe a woman, thought Stockton rather bitterly.

His clothes were fashionable, not to say foppish, and he wore a belted overcoat, and a Fedora hat and carried a slender cane.

"Hello, Vida, how have you been?" he exclaimed eagerly as he came forward; but stopped short at sight of Stockton, who had risen.

"How do you do—Anthony?" said the girl with an effort. She was deathly white. "This is Mr. Stockton, an attorney."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Stockton," said Whitcomb, offering his hand; but the young lawyer could not bring himself to touch it. He glossed over his omission with a formal bow. At once he took the reins of the conversation.

"I have called to see Miss—ah—Fortesque in connection with her uncle's death," he said in a slow, precise way that was calculating to gain time if nothing else. "I suppose you are aware of his untimely decease?"

"Your uncle *dead*, Vida?" exclaimed the man in amazement. "Why, I understood that he was in the best of health when I left New York. I'm awfully sorry to hear it! When did it happen, and how?"

"I take it that you did not see the morning or afternoon newspapers, Mr. Whitcomb?" pursued Stockton, anxious now to save the girl the necessity of speaking. She had taken up her favorite position by the window and had averted her face.

"Why, no, I didn't," said Whitcomb, looking worried, and Stockton had to applaud, however unwillingly, his consummate acting. "I came straight here from the train, you know. Perhaps Miss Fortesque told you that I've been on a three-weeks' trip in the West Indies? What happened, can't you tell me?"

"Captain Fortesque was struck on the head and instantly killed last evening by something falling from his own window in his hotel," said the attorney, watching the man closely.

"Good heavens! Killed? How terrible!" exclaimed Whitcomb, with just the right shade of surprise, horror and regret in his voice. He unfastened his overcoat as he spoke, and Stockton noticed that one of the pockets sagged a little. A pistol probably. Well, we must play for time. There must be no more bloodshed if possible.

"You say *something* fell on him?" pursued Whitcomb as he laid hat and cane on the table. "Don't they know what it is?"

"The authorities have reason to believe that it was an icicle," said the attorney slowly, still studying his man in an effort to learn the full nature of the task before him. Beneath his overcoat the young man wore a smart business-suit with a fountain-pen and a pencil or two peeping from an upper vest pocket. There was absolutely nothing sinister about him save for that slight bulge in his overcoat pocket; and that didn't look like a pistol.

"An icicle!" repeated Whitcomb, fumbling with his gloves, his face grave and preoccupied. "What an extraordinary thing! It was an accident, of course? I believe that I have read in the newspapers of such things happening."

Aunt Vinie came in at this moment and paused, arms akimbo, on her way to the kitchen.

"It had all the appearance of an accident," said Stockton noncommitally. His impulse was to leap at the man and overpower him suddenly before he could resist; yet he hated the thought of violence in Vida's little apartment.

The ex-aviator made a little clicking sound of distress. "This must have been a terrible shock for you, Vida," he said soberly. "You've come to see her in connection with her uncle's demise, I take it?"

"Yas, he gwine have de man what done hit arrested," explained Aunt Vinie, eager to help out the conversation. "Ah jes' done fotch de perlice!"

The old mammy's bombshell came too suddenly for Stockton to turn it aside. His muscles tensed for the conflict he knew must follow, for at all costs this man must not be allowed to escape. Vida wheeled from the window in horror, but did not dare even to speak. In the momentary silence that followed Stockton fancied that he could hear Miss Le Claire's breathing close to the crack of the bedroom door.

As for Whitcomb, not by the movement of an eyelash did he betray surprise at the announcement.

"Ah?" he said coolly, dropping his glove on the table. "Then you think it was—murder?"

Stockton said nothing. He was standing, legs spread apart, teetering slightly on the balls of his feet and ready for instant action. As little things will strike one in moments of stress, he was puzzling with part of his brain as to why Whitcomb carried his metal pencil in his vest pocket point up.

The smaller man was glancing nonchalantly at a handsome gold watch.

"Well, Mr.—ah—Stockton, I hope you succeed in catching the murderer, if murder it is," he said politely. "I'll come in again in the morning, if I may, Vida. Just now I've got to see a sugar broker downtown——"

"Sorry, you'll have to wait until you've answered a few questions," said Stockton shortly. "I'm from the district attorney's office—*no you don't!*"

He sprang just as Whitcomb's hand was on the door-knob, catching the smaller man with a jiu-jitsu trick by the arm. But Whitcomb seemed to be composed of spring steel and whale-bone, and in an instant the powerful hold was broken and the men had faced each other.

Vida screamed, and there was an answering scream from the bedroom. Aunt Vinie retreated warily to the kitchen.

"What's the meaning of this?" asked Whitcomb evenly. With a lightning-swift movement he slipped off his overcoat and flung it to one side. "If you have talked with Miss Fortesque at all, you must know that I have been in the South for three weeks, and can know nothing of all this."

"*You* haven't," Stockton snapped, beginning to see red. "Duke has, and he posted your letters for you all right."

"Ah?" The man was even smiling as he edged toward

the windows. Vida slipped swiftly away at a warning from the attorney, and paused at the bedroom door.

"Your night letter was a forgery," Stockton added, following him, "and your laundry number is on the handkerchief you threw away—ah, *would* you?"

Again he leaped as Whitcomb flung up the window-sash in an effort to get out on the fire-escape. The smaller man whirled and met him with a foul blow in the pit of the stomach that left him doubled up against the wall, white with agony, then dashed for the door, snatching up his cane as he passed the table.

This time it was Aunt Vinie who balked him. She charged from the kitchen with a yell, flourishing a small cleaver in a brawny and practised fist. Whitcomb dodged back just in time to escape a vicious swing from the grisly weapon.

The girl had cried out again when the two men clashed, and now clutched the handle of the door in a blind effort to escape. It gave under her hand, and swung open, and she lost her balance, tripped on the carpet and fell on her knees in the doorway.

Whitcomb turned away from Aunt Vinie with such an easy and natural laugh that she paused, staring at him with open mouth and hanging arm.

"Oh, well," he drawled, "it looks as though you held all the cards, doesn't it?" He stopped by the lounge, looking in through the open door at Nannette Le Claire, who stood with a ghastly face, muff and dog still in her arms.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Why, hello, Nettie! I thought it was kind of funny that Mr. Sherlock here had figured it all out so nicely! So we've turned squealer, have we? Isn't that amusing?"

Vida sat up where she was to watch him in horror, for his silky tones veiled unutterable menace. Miss Le Claire tried to speak and failed. She was trembling so that the little dog slipped from her arm and landed with a squeal of fright and anger on the floor. Stockton had recovered enough from the agony of the blow to be able to stand nearly erect, though he was still incapable of active part in the affray. His eyes fell on a substantial bronze Mercury standing on a bracket near him—probably a present from her uncle to Vida. He clutched it thankfully, for it was a weapon of sorts.

Whitcomb, who seemed to miss nothing, grinned cheerfully at him. He twisted at the head of his cane, which he still held, and drew out a long and wicked steel blade, tossing the shaft of the cane behind him on the lounge.

"So you have a club buried, eh?" he remarked casually. "You might call this a spade—what? And besides that" —he felt in his vest pocket and produced a little vial—"besides that this is the joker. No, you haven't got *quite* all the cards yet, Mr. District Attorney. Would you like to know what I first thought of dropping on unky's head? It would have furnished quite an exciting story for the newspapers—much more so than, shall we say, chalk-marks? Ever hear of soup, Mr. District Attorney?"

For a moment Stockton's heart stopped beating. "Good God!" he gasped. "Vida! *Get back in that room for your life!*"

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" cried the girl faintly.

Whitcomb's eyebrows went up. "'Vida,' eh? Well, well! We seem to have got acquainted mighty suddenly. No, you stay where you are, Vida, my dear. This is—you tell her what it is, my friend."

"Nitro-glycerin!" gasped Stockton in horror.

The little dog, which had been yapping continuously, evidently sensed Whitcomb's animosity toward his mistress, for he came charging out of the bedroom and attacked the man with a fury that would have been ludicrous had it not been courageous. Whitcomb laughed outright.

"Oh, and Nettie! I was almost forgetting Nettie the Snitch. Well, that's for you, Nettie!"

With the swiftness of a striking snake his arm went up and down and a glittering streak shot toward the young woman in the bedroom. By instinct she flung up her muff, and staggered back with a shriek as the cane-dagger pierced it from side to side.

"Damn it!" said Whitcomb cheerfully as the girl collapsed, moaning on the bed. "Oh, well, never mind; I'll attend to your case later. Now, my friend, get away from that window."

Stockton hesitated. Even in the face of the awful weapon that the ex-aviator still held he would not acknowledge himself beaten.

"Oh, I mean it," said the murderer with a smile that was more threatening than the scowl of a Japanese war-mask. "I'd far rather go out with you, and by this, than in that arm-chair up the river."

And Stockton knew that he meant it. Slowly and reluctantly he edged along the wall, and Whitcomb passed him by the width of the room, kicking the still yelping little dog out of his way, and paused with his back to the open window.

"Pretty stuff, isn't it?" he purred, holding the little vial up to the light and admiring its yellowish translucence. "One gets contemptuous of things like that after a few months at the front. Yes, you have all the cards—but the Joker."

Of a sudden his voice changed. "Well, Mr. Slacker, I suppose your pacific little heart is all fussed up over last evening's trifling affair?" he snarled. "Why shouldn't I get what's coming to me? Haven't I been making the world safe for democracy at risk of life and limb? Haven't I a right to a few of the pleasant things of the earth after the triple-distilled hells I've been through 'over there' for its sake? After I'm out on the fire-escape there I'm going to toss this into the middle of the floor, and you'll all go to glory together!"

"Ah don' know what yo'-all am gabbin' 'bout," remarked Aunt Vinie threateningly, "but ef yo' 'spec' to try any monkey-shines 'roun' *dis* niggah, yo'-all bettah guess agin!" She turned toward the door in response to a peremptory ring.

"The police, eh?" drawled Whitcomb. "Well, I guess I'd better be going." He backed toward the window.

Suddenly Stockton smiled, and took a step forward. "Behind you," he suggested meaningly.

"You damn fool," snarled the murderer, "d'you think you can catch me by any moth-eaten trick like *that?* I'm to turn my head, am I, and you'll——"

The sentence ended in a gurgle, for a huge and powerful hand had clutched him by the throat and another by the wrist that held the vial, and Inspector Morgan's voice snarled:

"Gotcha!"

"Hey, easy there!" yelled Stockton, dashing forward as the two men began to writhe and twist together; for Whitcomb was by no means subdued yet. The inspector's grip was so powerful on his wrist that he could not even open his hand to let the vial drop, but presently Stockton got the concentrated hell away from him. At the same time Whitcomb's resistance ceased, and he submitted quietly to being handcuffed. There was no need of the other plain-clothes men who came in via the fire escape, nor of the policemen who entered the door.

"So he's the guy, eh?" panted Morgan, nursing a scratch on his cheek. "Good thing you called me up. "Whatcha got on him?"

Stockton, resisting an urgent desire to collapse, now that the danger was over, went to the man's discarded overcoat. From the side pocket he drew a pair of heavy gas pliers; and then, with an exclamation of satisfaction, a small black mustache and a pair of big black goggles.

"What's them?" asked Morgan blankly. "And what's in that bottle?"

"Soup," said the attorney succinctly, and one of the detectives tied the vial gingerly in a handkerchief and put it in an inside pocket.

Stockton stared thoughtfully at the pliers, while the two girls watched from the bedroom door, then looked at Whitcomb. Of a sudden his eyes lighted, then narrowed ominously.

"That's it!" he cried, and snatched the metal pencil that had puzzled him from the murderer's vest pocket.

It was not a pencil after all, though it was very much the size and shape of one, and was furnished with an ordinary clip. It was a heavy steel spike, pointed like a

pencil at one end and with the other flaring out slightly in flanges set at an angle. It had been polished carefully.

"What *is* it?" asked Morgan.

"I know now! I remember seeing one once at an exhibition of war relics," exclaimed the attorney. "It's an aviator's dart, such as they used in the early part of the war. That twisted business at the butt makes it spin and fall straight and true. He wiped it on his handkerchief that I found, after he'd gone down to the street and pulled it out with these pliers. That right, Whitcomb?"

The ex-aviator nodded indifferently. "Yep, souvenir. Didn't want to lose it. You're a good guesser—*damn you!*"

Both manacled fists shot out and caught Stockton fairly on the point of the jaw before any one could move. And the young attorney went quietly to sleep.

The next thing of which he was conscious was that he was lying on the lounge in the disordered sitting-room, and over him was bending a very pretty, very woebegone face which was saying very nice things to him.

He shut his eyes and opened them again to make sure that the vision was real; then he struggled to get up.

"Lie still, Robert," said the owner of the face softly. "They've taken him away. They've all gone, even that girl. I—I had Aunt Vinie give him back his—his ring."

"You mean——" muttered Stockton, sitting up and nursing his aching jaw, his eyes suddenly very bright. "You mean——?"

"How did the police arrive so opportunely through the window?" asked the girl hastily.

Stockton's face fell again. "I'm afraid I'm not much of a hero," he mumbled ruefully. "I should have handled him single-handed; instead I had William connect me with police headquarters before he brought Whitcomb up here."

But somehow Vida did not seem to be impressed with this self-arraignment.

"Ah reckon Ah'll dess about git yo'-all somefin' to eat," remarked the old negress, starting toward the kitchen. And then, pausing in the doorway, she demanded: "When yo'-all 'spec' yo' gwine git marrified?"

Vida's vivid blush was sufficient answer to Stockton for the present.

Our next number will contain a remarkable detective story by the famous writer Edith Sessions Tupper. Read it.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.		No.	
1	THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown	10	THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
2	ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty	11	THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
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5	THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott	14	CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
6	A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall	15	AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
7	THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask	16	SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, by Chas. F. Oursler
8	THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode		
9	MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, by William Hamilton Osborne		

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JACKRABBITS MAY HELP WIN THE WAR

OUT in Utah they are trying to decide which is the lesser of two evils—the coyote or the jackrabbit. In that and neighboring States both are very numerous; and the jackrabbit is perhaps the least popular of the two, because he is a famous crop destroyer. Ordinarily the only effective check upon his multiplying numbers is the despised coyote. But coyotes in Utah recently became infected with hydrophobia and a menace to the population. Usually the coyote is too cowardly to attack a man, but, driven by madness, he is a very different enemy. So the good folk of Utah have been killing coyotes with all possible speed, and in the meanwhile the lowly jackrabbit has multiplied apace.

The State has so many jackrabbits that an ordinary hunting season makes no impression on their number. In order to somewhat lessen the plague, great drives have been under way. First a wire-net enclosure is built with a single opening and wings spreading outward in the shape of a V. These wings extend two or three miles. It is the object of the drive to force the rabbits into the V and so into the enclosure, where they are clubbed to death. Hundred of horsemen take part in the drive, and as many as 20,000 rabbits have been killed in one day.

In these times of economy and conservation, steps are under way to make use of both the meat and fur of the rabbits. A full-grown jackrabbit will weigh seven or eight pounds, and although the meat is somewhat coarse, it is by no means unedible. It has been proposed that next winter a regular service be inaugurated, shipping frozen jackrabbits to distant markets. San Francisco used about 100,000 this past winter. Another plan is to can the rabbit meat, which already has been done to some extent in Kentucky and Indiana.

But the rabbit's fur seems to be the real source of his value. In days before the war we imported something like 25,000,000 rabbit skins every year for felt hats; and all the while we have had this native supply right at our doors. The jackrabbit skins also would be most adaptable for the manufacture of gloves, caps, etc. Some one has proposed that the fur be used for army purposes.

Long before the white man came to Utah the Piute Indians who inhabited that region had learned the value of the jackrabbit's skin. Almost the whole of their scant clothes were made from these skins, and it was they who first discovered the plan of a drive against the rabbits. The Indians built enclosures just like those constructed to-day, save that they employed wild kelp fiber for the netting instead of wire.

THE PRIZE WINNER

By JOHN J. A'BECKET

"IF I could only get it on the market there would be thousands in it, Nannie, and we could get married right off," said Hathaway, with a slight cloud on his candid face.

"And to think that it is such a small amount of money after all," answered Nannie Eaton plaintively. "I wish I had it right in my hand now. You should have the model made for your invention and sent to the Patent Office as soon as you could. It may make us millionaires, Ned, and then we can have everything we want."

"Yes—and in the meantime we can't have anything that we want," replied the young man in a very bitter tone.

"Don't say that, Ned." Nannie put her hand impulsively on her lover's. "We have each other, and I will wait a hundred years for you. But it does seem hard that a young genius who has conceived such a brilliant invention as this cannot profit by his work because he can't get sixty, eighty, a hundred dollars to have the model of it made."

She began to chaff Ned about being beaten. He seemed absent-minded and serious.

"It shows that these are 'hard times' with a vengeance," returned the young fellow. "But it must come right in the end."

As if to start things in the desired direction he put his arm around the girl's neck, drew her head, with its silky, golden-brown hair, toward him and kissed her warmly.

Hathaway was a civil engineer, the son of a widowed mother, who depended entirely upon him for her support. Nannie Eaton's mother, also a widow, had a small income which afforded herself and daughter hardly any relief from economical forethought. They were gentlewomen with the need of maintaining their family distinction in the matter of clothes, place of residence, and style of living. Genteel poverty is the hardest grade of indigence.

Ned had been engaged to Nannie for a year. But everybody concerned felt that the young people ought not to marry until Hathaway was in a position to shoulder the expenses of a wife and family. Even the young man and woman recognized the reasonableness of this, but it was not very pleasant to have to accept such a condition of things.

Nannie Eaton was a sweet, lively girl, who liked riding her motor-cycle in summer and skating in winter. She could almost outscorch Ned Hathaway when they struck a long, level stretch of quiet road. There were a number of fine roads in Y——, and almost a fever of interest in the sport. Y—— had recently had a festival, in which prizes were given for all sorts of different things. It had been a howling success. The neighboring city of M——, which was the great municipal rival of Y——, was also in healthy bondage to the cycle. It had a splendid avenue, broad and level, which ran from one end of the city to the other, and then became a country road, almost as good for riding, for miles. With such superior advantages as this, far better than anything Y—— could boast, and with even more enthusiasm in motor-cycle matters than its rival, it was thought M—— would not view the parade in the former city with indifference.

It did not. That had been a day affair. M—— proceeded to organize a night pageant for the scorchers. The city went wild over the idea. The long, broad avenue was overarched by elms for nearly the whole of its extent. What possibilities for illumination with Chinese lanterns, electric lights and the like those overlacing boughs afforded! To thoroughly outdo Y—— in this night pageant, there were more prizes offered, there were prizes for a greater variety of things, and they were of greater value than those which had been put up to stimulate the ambitious cyclers of the rival town. As one of the local papers in M—— remarked editorially:

"We have already surpassed our sister city in its creditable but somewhat modest list of prizes, and there can be

no doubt that the brilliancy of a night pageant, with its bewildering variety of lights, is far beyond that of a day spectacle. It only remains to be seen whether the ingenuity and civic parade of M—— will bring out worthier candidates than the Y—— motor-cycle festivity produced. That it will do so is hardly matter for doubt. Many of the designs, decorations, and costumes at this little affair in Y—— were quite pretty, though it must be allowed that nothing was startlingly original or notably striking by reason of its tasteful elegance."

The last sentence was characteristic of the editorial comment of M—— papers on Y—— doings. However, it was equally characteristic of the Y—— papers when its neighbors was in question. It was the first duty of an editorial writer in either city to dart his eye over the rival papers every morning to see if his town had come in for the damnation of faint praise, or the exaltedly patronizing tone of the moral censor, deprecating unseemly infirmities in the other city's civic constitution.

Y—— proceeded to typographically belittle the coming "imitation of our city's broadly fostering care of the community's well-being in the healthful sport of the motor-cycler," and to inwardly quake at the prospect of being outshone by a more glorious display. All the young people in both cities who rode were intensely excited over the coming event.

When Nannie Eaton read that among the prizes was one of a silver-mounted Indian, or a purse of $150, as the winner might elect, for the woman appearing in the most novel costume in the M—— pageant, she exclaimed with artless enthusiasm and town pride: "Oh, how I wish some woman from here would get that prize, just to take the wind out of their sails!"

Mrs. Eaton was not very strong, and it was a lucky thing that her brother, Silas Codman, a wealthy New York merchant, happened to come to Y—— for his annual visit to his sister, just in time to take his niece over to M—— for this pageant. Nannie would not have missed it for the world, and as she had to spend the night at M——, if she went, but for this opportune arrival of Uncle Silas, she would have had to be content with reading about it in the papers. She knew that neither press of the rival cities could be relied on for a fair account of the thing. M—— would overdo, Y—— underdo it. So, having wrought Uncle Codman up to a ferment of enthusiasm about the riders of Y——, and a keen desire to see how far short of them M—— would fall, she departed for the latter city in the charge of that worthy relative, on the morning of the day of the festivity.

The evening was one to make Y—— fume. It was perfectly adapted to the glitter and flashing lights and sparkling illuminations of the M—— pagent. The sky was clear, but a blue black. The moon would not enter into rivalry with the myriad sublime spheres, which flashed, or glittered, or glowed, in the wide, elm-arched avenue. The air, moreover, was perfectly still, not a breath of wind to blow out lights or set lanterns ablaze, or mingle smoke with flame. Through the broad avenue flowed a river of bobbing globes of multi-colored fires, great globules of blue and yellow and green and orange and red in every shade, Chinese lanterns floating lightly along in the gently seething stream of color. Then the electric lights, the graceful festoons of orbs and ovoids and paper bodies of every shape, mellow with the lights within them, that swung from branch to branch of the elms, in exquisite curves and swaying festoons, made a glowing network above the motor-cyclers' heads.

Y—— was downed, thrown flat on her municipal back, choking with envy, not even a good second. Not one thought to soothe the chagrin of defeat except the gross one that it must have cost M—— a pretty penny to do it. Yes. There was one other.

As the gaily decorated machines and the costumed riders glided by, greater or lesser applause from the dense crowd that lined either side of the avenue told of the variously meritorious taste of the masquerading riders. Uncle Silas, with a huge field-glass, was eagerly scanning the procession as they swept by below the balcony of his room at the Dunthorpe House.

Far down the line a great roar of applause had started and ran along the whole file of spectators, steadily increasing in volume as it approached the judges' stand, which was in front of the Dunthorpe. Some rider had caught the popular fancy, and as he or she came into view, kindled the throng to burst of enthusiasm.

Ah, here was the conquering hero, and it was a conquering heroine.

"A Gold Bug!" "Good!" "Great!" "Ain't that immense?" "Hurrah! You've got it!" "She is the dandy!" broke from the populace, as the glittering object gracefully glided by.

It was a shapely woman who had got herself up as a Gold Bug. The head and antennæ and wings, coated with gold foil, glittered as if solid layers of the precious metal. The brightest yellow silk fleshings, and narrow bands of black satin at varying intervals and widths, not an inch wide at the top, and narrowing proportionately as they approached the ankles, made her limbs columns of alternating jet and gold. The arms of the woman were sheathed in black suede kid, studded with tiny gold beads. The head of the bug concealed the head of the woman so that it could not be seen. The wings and body extended over the hind wheel of the cycle.

Small paper globes, so made that the front and sides were round and painted to look like twenty-, ten- and five-dollar gold pieces, while the rest of the lantern was opaque, decorated the bar of the wheel.

A string of perfectly graded, round, yellow balls, illumined, but in the thinnest of black gauze, as if to hint at the present retirement of gold, dangled from a bar above the rider's head in a line parallel to the wheels.

It was a novel, striking, artistic spectacle. Nothing in the line was so original, so fetching, so perfectly carried out as this conception of "A Gold Bug."

The judges awarded the prize for "the woman who should appear in the most original costume" to this lady without one dissentient voice. Popular acclaim had already declared her the worthiest competitor for it.

When the prize was bestowed there were two drawbacks to the satisfaction of the community of M——. The young woman declared herself to be "Miss Prima Golden, of Y——." This was disgusting enough. When Miss Golden promptly elected to have the money instead of the silver-mounted motor, all the women of M—— said this mercenary spirit was just what they would have expected in a Y—— woman, and audibly expressed their gratitude for liking the sport for itself alone.

Subsequently the M—— papers had a sop to their wounded feelings. Diligent inquiry among the women of Y—— who rode the cycle failed to discover any one who had ever heard of "Miss Prima Golden." Whereupon, with much dignity, the M—— papers declared that they refused to accord the glory of the prize to a Y—— motor-cycle woman (the money had already gone to the Gold Bug competitor), until her identity as such was fully established. It could easily have been an enemy of M—— who had taken this means of humiliating it. As no Y—— woman came forward and said she was the winner, but had given an assumed name, the matter remained unsettled.

"Ned, if you had the money you would get the model for your invention made right off, wouldn't you?" asked Nannie Eaton, of her young man a few days after the pageant in M——. Uncle Silas had departed the day before.

"Sure!" returned Mr. Hathaway, with much emphasis. "But you'd think it was a gold mine I had to get. It is almost as hard to find it."

"Well, there it is!" exclaimed Nannie proudly, holding out a hundred-dollar bill and a fifty-dollar bill.

Ned gasped with surprise; then grinned with delight; then pushed it away.

"I can't take it from you, Nannie. You can't afford it, and, in any case, I wouldn't borrow money from the girl I was engaged to. Thank you, awfully, dear girl, for your kindness."

"Ned Hathaway, don't be silly!" exclaimed Miss Eaton, impatiently. "Take it! You don't object to owing my Uncle Silas one hundred and fifty dollars, I hope, when you need it so badly, and he a millionaire."

"Oh, that's a different thing, Nannie," cried the young man. "I'm perfectly willing to owe Mr. Codman a thousand dollars, for when my invention gets on the market I know well enough I can pay it back. You were a trump to get it for me."

"Don't mention it," said Nannie merrily. "It's all in the family. Only I mean that 'Don't mention it,' literally, for Uncle Silas would be vexed if he knew what I had done with the money."

"All right. I'll keep quiet about it then."

The next Saturday afternoon they took a turn on their motor-cycles. When they got out in the country, they had a race. Nannie beat Ned, and was sitting on the green slope at the side of the road before he got to the point agreed on. She was laughing good-naturedly over her triumph, and began to chaff Ned about being beaten, after he had seated himself by her side. He seemed absent-minded and serious.

"Nannie," he said slowly, "there's something I've got to tell you. It's troubling me. You know I was at that show in M——. Well, after it was over, I coursed about in one of the side-streets, where there was not so much of a crowd. A cab was coming down the street, when an idiot of a boy threw a fire-work of some kind right in front of the horse. It began to spit fire and bang like blue blazes, and the horse ran away. The cabby couldn't control him. There was a woman inside. She stood up, in her alarm, and perhaps was thinking of jumping out. I saw that she was the 'Gold Bug' girl, from her black and yellow legs. I was afraid she would jump, and bounced off my motor, got in front of the horse, made him pull up a little and then grabbed and held him.

"The girl drew her mackintosh around her again. She had on a thick black veil and I could only see that she was pale and had dark hair.

"I asked her if she wanted to take another cab, and she shook her head—making signs with her fingers. I had a notebook and pencil which I handed to her, saying I didn't know the alphabet that deaf and dumb people use, and if she wanted to say anything she could write it in that. She only scrawled in a back-handed writing: 'Thanks, I'll go on in this cab. You are very kind.'

"Well, Nannie," said Ned sheepishly, "that girl has stuck in my memory ever since. It's a sort of infatuation. I thought I could shake it, or that it would wear away. But it hasn't. It's unreasonable to feel this way, and I don't know what's the matter. But it's only honorable to tell you, because I haven't been able to use that money you got for me when I was so—so—oh, I don't know what to call it," he said almost angrily, "but I can't use it while she is in my thoughts like this. It may wear off in a little while. She gave a false name, and I haven't been able to find a trace of her, although she was a Y—— woman. At least, she said so to the judges."

"Oh, you tried to look her up, did you?" exclaimed Miss Eaton, a little sharply.

"Yes. It is a tom-fool thing, Nannie, but I had to tell you, for I can't use that money from you while I've got this interest in that girl. She had a beautiful figure, and rode well, and then finding out her infirmity, kind of clinched it. Now you know the whole thing. You'll have to take back the money."

Mr. Hathaway again looked sheepish and also gloomy.

"Then, I suppose, you had better take this back," said Miss Eaton, tugging at her engagement-ring.

"Oh, no! Don't rub it in, Nannie. I know that this is a fool thing, and I love you better than a thousand 'Gold Bugs.' If I hadn't cared for you so much I wouldn't have told you till later. But it vexed me to be caught in such a fix."

"You always said you liked blondes better than brunettes," remarked Nannie reproachfully. "I ought to break the engagement at once and never see you again. You can't expect a girl to forgive a man for loving another girl better than herself. They never do. They simply break their hearts, or get some better fellow. I don't mean to break my heart, Mr. Hathaway, I can assure you."

"I should hope not," answered the young man gloomily. "I'm not worth *that*. Oh, it's a stupid thing, and it was stupid to tell you of it. But I felt like a hypocrite. I don't begin to care for the girl as I do you, Nan. How could I? But she sticks in my mind like a burr. I only wanted you to know it, and understand why I return the money. You do, don't you?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Miss Nannie disdainfully. "I admire your nobility in not taking pecuniary assistance from one girl when you have transferred your affection to another. I will keep the money till you get to a more desirable frame of mind by falling a little deeper in love with this golden creature, or falling out of it entirely. I think you had better fall more in love with her, for I do not know as I can bring myself to regard this 'infatuation,' as you call it, so lightly as to take you back when you see fit to return. There are plenty of nice young men in this town, Mr. Hathaway. We will go home now, and pray don't trouble yourself to call until you receive an invitation from me to do so."

It was in vain that Hathaway tried to get her to regard the matter from his point of view. He had only tried to be honorable and candid with her, and he loved her. Why would she put such a serious aspect to this silly episode, etc., etc. Miss Eaton was obdurate.

He got no invitation to call for a whole week. He had never before realized how empty a place Y—— was, and what hard work it was for a young man to fill his evenings agreeably.

After eight days Miss Eaton got a note.

"My Dear Nannie:

"Can you ever forgive me for being such a fool? I am cured. It was a ridiculous affliction, but if it has robbed me of your dear love I think it may be a fatal one—for me. Don't think I have been thrown down by the 'Gold Bug' woman. Quite the contrary. I inclose a note which I received from that lady, which should have had quite a different effect. It has cured me of her absolutely. So I have something to thank her for. May I not come and see you soon and try to get you to forget what a fool I have been?

"Yours most devotedly forever,

"E. J. Hathaway."

"P. S.—I sent a note to the lady that she had over-estimated my slight service, and that I would not be able to call.

"P. P. S.—It must have been what she said about her *not* being dumb that settled the business. As soon as I read that I was cured on the spot."

The inclosed note, which Miss Eaton merely glanced at, and then tossed on her writing-table, ran as follows:

"My Dear Sir:

"I have often thought since your gallant rescue of me the night of the motor-cycle parade in M—— that I have not shown a proper gratitude. I was so nervous at the time, and in such dread of being recognized, that I pretended I was dumb. I am not. I hope you will give me an opportunity to prove that I possess both speech and hearing by calling on me next Thursday evening at eight o'clock at the Algonquin House. Anything I have to say further I will reserve till then,

"Prima Golden."

Miss Eaton wrote a nice little note in reply to Mr. Hathaway's, stating that she really must allow him time to let his heart settle, and that it seemed to her as if he were treating the "Gold Bug" lady rather cavalierly, *especially* when she had made such an unusual concession as to invite him to call. Evidently *she* was bright and energetic, for she had found out Mr. Hathaway's name and address, while had not Mr. Hathaway informed her that he had failed to discover the lady's, despite much effort and perseverance? She herself had been going out more of late, and had engagements for every evening that week with different gentlemen friends, but perhaps the following week, if Mr. Hathaway suffered no relapse, she might find some evening free, if another golden beauty had not bewitched him in the meantime.

Two or three days later Mr. Hathaway got a second note from the "Gold Bug" lady, expressing once more the hope that he would call. "I have heard that you are in need of some assistance to forward a scheme. It has occurred to me that if you will allow me to lend you the money which I got at this pageant it would be a very appropriate use for it. I only mention this because it seems such a ready way of showing my gratitude to you, and I trust you will regard it in this light. I shall not be a hard creditor. Can you not come to see me Tuesday evening at eight?"

Ned Hathaway, instead of being grateful, was wrathy over this note. He did not like the money part of it. Then this woman must be making inquiries about him pretty persistently to know his private affairs so well. He wrote a short, formal note declining the offer, and said that if the lady would kindly forbear from mentioning again his services on the occasion referred to, he would regard it as the truest kindness. He said nothing about this note to Miss Eaton.

The next day a few lines came to him from an intimate friend of Nannie Eaton's, Lonie Farmer, saying Miss Eaton was going to spend the following evening with her, and she had thought Mr. Hathaway might like, perhaps, to call and ride home with her friend, who was going to come on her motor-cycle.

The Farmers lived about a mile out of town in a huge colonial house, with broad verandas running around it. Hathaway dressed with special care and a light heart. He felt if Nannie would only meet him half-way this Gold Bug episode could be wiped out effectively. When he arrived, Lonie Farmer greeted him alone, and took him to a corner of the veranda, overshadowed by trees, on the lawn. It was the pleasant dusk of summer, and more interesting than sitting in a lighted room. Miss Eaton would probably arrive soon.

After chatting with him for half an hour, Miss Farmer jumped up, asking to be excused while she looked up a fan. The rest of the family had gone into town to the theater. Hathaway settled in his rocking-chair, and began to wonder if Nannie was going to fail him after all.

Suddenly, a burst of light at the other end of the veranda made him turn his head. "The Gold Bug," in all her glory, had darted around the corner on her motor-cycle and was making straight for him! He rose, indignant, half-inclined to beat a retreat. How the dickens had she got here? Was this a conspiracy on the part of Miss Farmer and the lady? He turned his face toward the lawn as if he had not noticed the unobtrusive (?) apparition. As the "Gold Bug" rode up and dismounted, Miss Farmer came through the window onto the veranda.

"Why, how lovely of you to drop in," she said to the "Gold Bug." "Mr. Hathaway, do you know Miss Golden? What good fortune that she should come when you are here. She tells me you were awfully good to her the night of the M—— parade, and will never allow her to thank you. Sit down, Prima, dear."

There was a wriggle of the "Gold Bug" at this request, as if something were agitating its interior economy. Miss Farmer suddenly added: "Oh, you can't, can you, except on your cycle? Don't you want me to help you out of your shell? Mr. Hathaway has never seen you except *incognito*."

"Pray, don't disturb yourself," said Hathaway quickly. "Some one else may come and I am sure they would be pleased to see the lady in this exquisite guise."

"Oh, is that nasty, hateful Eaton girl going to be here?" came in shrill tones from beneath the gilded head of the "Gold Bug."

Lonie Farmer, instead of resenting this disrespectful way of alluding to her expected guest and dearest friend, burst into a peal of laughter and sank into a chair. As Hathaway rose very stiffly, and without trying to veil a look of disgust, said "he thought he would bid her good-evening," the girl's merriment only increased, till the tears ran down her cheeks. It was perfectly evident that the "Gold Bug" was convulsed with mirth also.

No young man can stand being laughed at unreservedly by two pretty girls. Especially, when he feels that he has been lured into a trap that he might be the butt of a merciless merriment. As for this brazen "Gold Bug," he didn't look for anything very different from *her*. But it was pretty low down for Miss Farmer to guffaw in his presence at the jealous creature's spiteful allusion to Nannie Eaton. He grasped his hat and, without any formality except a stiff bow, was starting off, when Miss Farmer put a restraining hand on his arm.

"Oh, wait—one—minute!" she gasped. As he sulkily stood, she hastily removed the gold shell from the "Prize Winner of Y——." As she did so, the "Gold Bug" plucked a curly, black wig from her head, and Hathaway beheld the laughing face of—Nannie Eaton.

"You poor, dear man!" she cried breathlessly as she threw herself into a chair and turned her bright eyes on him, her cheeks dimpling with her smile. "Sit down, and we'll talk it all over. So you lost all interest in 'Prima Golden' when you learned that she wasn't dumb. Ned, what you need is a woman who can say the right thing at the right time."

"Nannie," said the young fellow with an impudent grin, "you may not be able to do that. But you know when to keep your mouth closed, and that is a rarer gift in your sex."

Be sure to read the story by Beulah Poynter in our next number.

THE ACE OF HEARTS

By JAMES S. BURDETTE

ON the evening of September 10th I was strolling up the street towards Phil Ames' apartments. I thought to pass an evening with my friend over the pipes. As I approached the mass of bachelors' quarters, I met Phil and two gentlemen.

"Going up, old man?" said he cordially. "Here's the key. We'll be back shortly."

We had been chums from student days, and this was nothing unusual. A few moments later I was comfortable in Phil's steamer-chair, smoking a long church-warden, that was always reserved for me. What a pleasure is the weed! A few puffs, and one has smoke enough to construct the good old times, or the bright new times.

I had enjoyed for some time tobacco and transitory reflection, when there came a gentle knock on the door. I sprang up and opened it to see the pretty, frightened face of Mrs. John Winters. She quickly pulled down her veil, but the story was told.

"Is Mr. Ames here?" she asked huskily, before I could voice my surprise.

"No, madam," I answered.

"I must leave a message for him," she said nervously, and she brushed by me into the room. She went to the desk, but not a scrap of paper was there, only a new pack of playing-cards. Hastily she took a pen and lightly scribbled a few lines on the varnished face of the topmost card—the ace of hearts—and then rushed from the room. I returned to the pipe.

With new tobacco came new thoughts. Ah! that was why Phil had of late been so friendly with Winters, that was why he had become less cynical of women, that was why he had become so minutely correct of attire. But who would have thought it of Phil? And why not? Large, handsome and wealthy, he was in good condition for a woman's eye. And then he was only a man. Yet he had a good name. Still, she was young and pretty, and Winters was a brute; at least, they said so, and a good deal more that would have ostracized him with proof. Right or wrong? Well, the circumstance qualifies the fact. And circumstance can be as logical as the selfishness desires. But what was the trouble? Something very positive that she should take such a risk. What did that card say? Of course, I could not read it. What was it to me, anyway? But I would that honor could be suspended for a few moments. Perhaps Phil had neglected her? Ah! that I could see that card. Perhaps she had an errand for him. Could I not softly step up to it, and no one know? No, no; that must not be. Perhaps she could tolerate Winters no longer. Well, anyway, I had better put the deck where only Phil would get it. I went over to the desk. I know I intended to take them all, but I could only grasp that ace. There, across the face, was written, the ink just dry:

"DEAR PHIL—Don't come to-morrow. He suspects. With love, HELEN."

Then I heard steps without, and I had just time to slip the card into the deck, when Phil and the two others came in.

"Hello, old man," said Phil gaily. "What's up? You look quite white. Have you been trying perique? You never would touch it before."

I did not contradict his idea.

"Well," he continued, "we'll follow your example with these." He took a box of cigars from the desk.

The two gentlemen, whom he presented as Mr. Powells, a comedian star, and Mr. Boles, his manager, took each one, as did Phil and I. We all sat down, and Mr. Boles at once began a quiet conversation with Phil. From a word or two I judged it was a financial matter; but Mr. Powells blocked me out by a few stories. I supposed they were humorous, so I laughed at periods; but my mind was all on the ace of hearts. How to get word to Phil? How to keep the result of my curiosity from him? How to prevent any one disturbing the pack?

As I sat scheming, there was a rap on the door. Phil sprang up and flung it open. There was John Winters. I was instantly on my feet.

"Hello, Winters!" greeted Phil.

"Hello, Jack!" said the others.

"'Evening, everybody," said Winters, entering.

He was a short, square-built man, who claimed to be a stockbroker.

"Well, Winters, we've been waiting for you. Are you ready?" said Phil.

Winters nodded.

They all drew up to the center table. Phil reached over and took the deck of cards from the desk. I declined to join. I knew Winters, and then I wanted to be on guard.

There was a game for a man to remember. There was poker more exciting to the spectator than to the player. There was the card in play; get it out, impossible. If Winters saw it, if the others saw it! Oh, what a plague is play!

On the first hand Winters drew four cards. I got behind him and saw that one was the ace of hearts; the others were hidden. He opened heavily and only Phil came in. The betting continued until there was quite a sum in the pot. Then, most unreasonably, Winters glanced through his hand. I watched him; but his face was like that of a statued Roman. Then he threw up his hand. The next pot went to the dealer, and then it was Winters' deal.

Carefully, very carefully, he shuffled the pack. Neatly and quickly he dealt. As soon as Winters looked at his cards, his face became like that of a starved man. He glanced about.

"Three cards," he said. Then he walked over to the sideboard and gulped down a glass of brandy. When he resumed his seat he shot a lightning glance at Phil, which made him flush to the brows. I expected to see an explosion every minute, but Winters held himself well in hand. He even yawned when at eleven o'clock he cashed in his chips and bade everybody good-night. Powells and Boles left soon after. Scarcely had the door closed behind them, when I made a clean breast of the affair and told Phil all. Like the chivalric fellow he was, Phil denied all knowledge

of Mrs. Winters, swore roundly that he had never met her, and was so extravagant in his denials that I knew he was lying to shield the woman's reputation. I left him with a parting injunction to look out for Winters, and went away with sorrowful forebodings.

The next day the evening papers were filled with accounts of an alleged mysterious suicide. With trembling fingers I glanced down the columns and read:

"Philip Ames, the wealthy young bachelor and clubman, was found dead in his apartments this morning. He lay upon his back in his bed. His right hand was clasped around the handle of a curiously shaped paper-knife, which was thrust through his heart, severing the aorta. When examined by the police with a microscope, the blank side of the card showed evidences of having been rubbed with some substance in order to remove pencil-marks or pen-writing."

Six months later Winters died of delirium tremens.

GUM-CHEWING HAS ITS GOOD REASONS

AS one of the results of this war a great chewing gum factory has been established in England, and it is said that the practice of jaw-gymnastics is slowly but surely making its way among the British public, to the great disgust of fastidious persons, whose eyes and ears are offended by the sight and sound of the rhythmic movements of the mandibles of expert performers.

Which leads the *New York Medical Journal* to sum up the evidence for and against gum chewing. The most serious—perhaps the only—objection to it is esthetic. From this point of view it is less vile than tobacco chewing only because it does not involve the disgusting expectoration. Chewing for purposes other than the preparation of food for digestion has been practiced by man in all climes and ages and of all races, and of all the means of masticatory stimulation—tobacco, betel nut, the pacifier, a toothpick, a straw, or gum—the American gum is most harmless. "It assists to a certain extent in cleaning the teeth after a meal; it promotes the flow of saliva, thus permitting this digestive secretion to reach the food which is often hastily swallowed in the quickly snatched meal that many persons indulge in, and it leads to no excesses and cannot be said to cause the formation of a habit."

Athletes say that chewing gum steadies and soothes them in the muscular concentration of a game.

Therefore the Medical Journal can see no reason why this American custom should not be extended over the known globe.

THE PUBLIC LANDS

THAT Uncle Sam has been something of a real estate dealer in his time is attested by the records of the Land Office at Washington, which is more than a century old.

Nearly all of the land in the country outside of the thirteen original colonies has at some time been owned by the government. A billion and a quarter acres have been sold or given away; about 3,000,000 acres, including the national forests, parks and military reservations, are still retained.

Until half a century ago the only policy of the government with regard to its lands was to sell them at the best price obtainable. The first sale was in 1787, when 2,000,000 acres in Ohio were sold at auction in New York for $1 an acre.

The largest sales in any year were those of 1836, when 20,000,000 acres were disposed of. The great panic of 1837 was due largely to the general speculation of the year before in public lands.

In 1862 the enactment of the homestead laws put an end to the policy of selling public lands solely for the revenue they would bring; the new laws, under certain conditions, provided homes for settlers.

About that time the government began also to give land to railways as an inducement to build in undeveloped regions. In this manner 190,000,000 acres have been given away—an area nearly as large as that of the thirteen original colonies. But the government has not confined its generosity to the railways; fully one-seventh of the whole public domain has been given to the soldiers of our wars.

NEWEST THINGS

A NEW device for carrying spare tires on the back of an automobile can be dropped to serve as a carrier of baggage or freight.

To encourage boring for oil, the government of South Australia has offered a large cash bonus to the first person or corporation producing 100,000 gallons of crude 90 per cent. petroleum from a well.

Made in sections that can be built up to any desired size, a heater has been invented for utilizing the waste gases from internal combustion engines for heating water or raising low pressure steam.

Crude oil in its tanks limited the amount of water which could enter a steamship when it struck rocks near Ceylon and punctured large holes in its hull, and enabled it to reach port five days later.

A Chicago inventor's hand signal for light for automobilists is so arranged that when mounted on a man's finger the extension of his hand to warn following vehicles automatically switches on the current.

Both adding and substracting can be done with a new calculating machine that is about the size of a watch and can be carried in a vest-pocket.

A French inventor claims the record for efficiency for an oil engine that has a fuel consumption of less than forty pounds per horsepower per hour.

To extinguish fires in cable boxes, where water might cause short circuiting, a device has been invented for injecting flame-smothering gases.

According to a census taken in Denmark, which has about one-third of the area of Wisconsin, that country has more than 5,400,000 fruit trees.

A patent has been granted for a process for increasing the durability of lead paints by the addition of soft water, zinc sulphate and kerosene.

A process has been invented in Europe for applying oxyhydrogen gas jets to metals under water to cut them almost as well as if in the open air.

Electric light companies in Germany require their lamp trimmers to save scraps of old carbons, which are cemented together for further use.

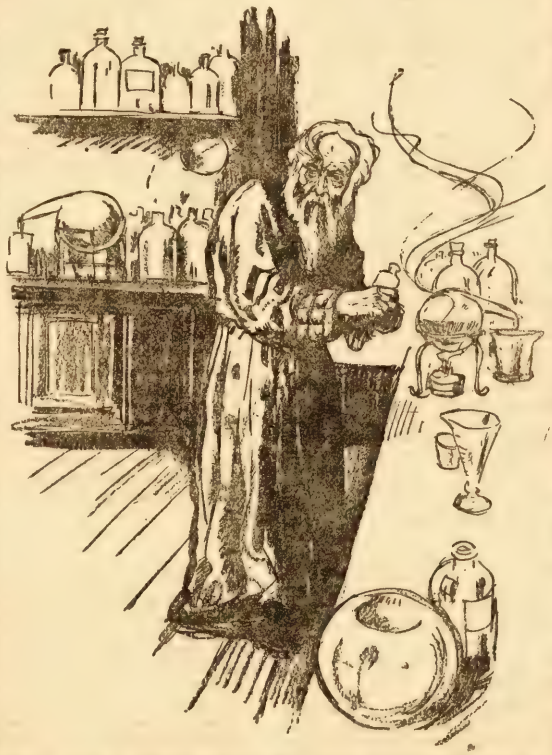
ROOM "99"

By FRANCIS WORCESTER DOUGHTY

THERE are old forgotten churches in New York, located in by-streets, whose very names are known only to those immediately interested, and there are old-time hotels, once popular resorts and familiar to every one, but now far beyond the range of public recollection.

Such a hotel, until quite recently, flourished on a prominent down-town street just off Broadway. Dry-goods buyers would go there and nowhere else. The uninitiated wondered how the house could possibly maintain its existence, and yet it flourished, until one day the buyers, for some unexplained reason, suddenly began to give it the cold shoulder. That settled its fate. The house was pulled down. It was only a type of many others, not a few of which are still in existence. One must be entirely familiar with New York, to now recognize them. Persons thoroughly acquainted with all the ins and outs of the metropolis are growing scarcer day by day, and it is doubtful if a dozen could be found, without special reasons for knowing, who ever heard of Benson's Hotel, for many years the favorite resort of schooner captains and stone men, whose business interests lay with the marble and granite yards at Corlears Hook Park.

All around it were tenements of the lower class, but on its immediate block a few of the old Quaker families still resided with here and there some prosperous Irish contractor sandwiched in between them. In those days Benson's Hotel was full every night with a line of guests who, if not laying claim to "style," certainly had plenty of money to spend.



There stood an elderly man shaking an orange-colored liquid in a flask over an alcohol lamp.

Late on one raw November day several years ago, Dr. Willard Wylde, a young M. D., who had just passed his matriculation, while riding from Port Jervis to New York on the Erie Railroad chanced to overhear some strange statements in relation to Benson's Hotel.

He was seated in the smoking-car, half asleep, with his head against the window and his hat pulled down over his eyes, when the train stopped at Middletown, and a stout, prosperous-looking gentleman, evidently a drummer, entered the car and claimed acquaintance with the gentleman in the seat directly in front of Dr. Wylde.

"What brought me up here?" Wylde overheard him say, in response to his friend's question after the first cordial greetings had been exchanged. "Why, I've been to the Middletown Insane Asylum to see Randall."

"Indeed," was the reply. "Is he any better?"

"No; nor never will be."

"Still raving about the lady with the green hair?"

"Just the same. Mysterious, ain't it?"

"Very, as I understand the story."

"Wonder if you know it as it really is?"

"Can't say. Heard he went on a terrible toot, was missing for weeks and finally turned up stark mad, and able to talk about nothing else but this mysterious female with the green hair."

"You're dead wrong, my dear fellow. Randall hadn't drank a drop in a year, and I know it. He had the misfortune to occupy Room 99 at Benson's Hotel last May. I understand no one has ever occupied it since."

"And what may that mean?"

"Let me explain; that room is at the bottom of the whole business. For the last three years as many as six men who have occupied it have disappeared mysteriously during the night, in every instance their baggage found undisturbed in the morning, not a thing missing but the lodger, who never in any instance, except in the case of Randall, has been seen or heard of again. It took the proprietor some time to grasp the situation, for months would elapse between these mysterious disappearances, and at first it was supposed that the missing man had simply made off for reasons of his own, though just how it is hard to determine, for I understand the door was always found locked on the inside, and the only window in the room is rather too high for a jump; but the hotel people know it now, and, as I said before, since poor Randall was found wandering about the streets mad, no one has ever been allowed to sleep in Room 99, and I very much doubt if any one ever will again."

Now to all this and more—for the conversation did not end here—Dr. Wylde listened with close attention.

The drummer's strange story produced on his mind a most powerful impression.

Willard Wylde loved mystery better than he loved the profession he had chosen, which, truth told, he did not love at all. Possessed of ample means, and under no necessity to practice, this young man had preferred the pen to scalpel and medicine chest. Perhaps he was a literary genius—at least, he thought so, for he had already two novels—tales of mystery—published at his own expense, and was now at work on a third.

Mystery! It was Willard Wylde's pet word. A mysterious room in a hotel—a real mystery! The very thing! It must be investigated—it should be, and at once.

Then and there Dr. Wylde resolved to sleep in Room 99, Benson's Hotel, that very night.

He had to look in a directory to find the house, when the ferryboat landed him in New York, for he had never heard of it before, and when he found that it was located on lower Jackson street he had to look in the back of the big book to find where that was, for Jackson street was to him as much an unknown quantity as Benson's Hotel.

But Dr. Wylde saw other streets on the East Side of New York that evening, the very names of which were strange to him, before he reached his destination; for fatigued with sitting in the cars and being unincumbered with other baggage than a small grip, he undertook to walk to Benson's, going through the notorious "Hungarian Quarter," by way of Canal street to its junction with Jefferson, and thence by way of Monroe street to Jackson, where he found the house without difficulty, being guided by the bright light which burned above the door.

Dr. Wylde was one of those quiet, self-centered, determined young men who having once taken a resolve, never for an instant entertain the thought of retreat.

He paused in front of the hotel only long enough to take in its surroundings, the chill November wind sweeping bleakly up from the East River as he looked.

Certainly there was nothing mysterious or forbidding in the appearance of Benson's Hotel, which stood about midway on the block between two old-fashioned houses, seemingly still occupied by private families. Alongside the door of the house toward the river was a doctor's sign. By the light of the hotel lamp Wylde read the name. Dr. Klix, the usual designation of office hours being below. On the corner beyond was a drug-store, and directly opposite a livery stable with several tumble-down frame buildings on either side.

Such was the general appearance of the block. The hotel was decidedly the brightest spot upon it, and when Wylde entered and walked up to the desk he found that it was brighter inside than without, for a crackling wood fire burning in an open hearth, around which a number of plain, but substantial-looking guests sat smoking, talking and reading, gave the office a decidedly home-like look, and this more particularly since this room and those which opened off it, writing-room, billiard-room and bar, were well kept and scrupulously clean.

"Can I have a room here to-night, sir?" asked Wylde, placing his grip on the counter.

"Certainly," replied the clerk. "Will you register?"

Wylde wrote a name in the big book. "I would like Room 99 if you could let me have it," he quietly said.

The clerk shot a curious glance at him.

"Why do you ask for that particular room?" he inquired.

"A friend of mine who recommended me here occupied it two years ago. He told me it was a good room."

"Sorry, sir, 99 is engaged. I can give you 98, right opposite. Exactly the same kind of room."

"I should prefer 99."

"For any particular reason?"

"The reason I have named."

"You might ask the proprietor. I can't give it to you."

Wylde saw that he had reached the end of his rope. To ask the proprietor after having been thus emphatically refused by the clerk would be pretty certain to force him to show his hand—precisely what he did not propose to do.

"Oh, very well; it makes no difference," he said, carelessly. "Show me to 98."

It was now half-past eight o'clock. Wylde washed up, left his grip in the room, and went down into the restaurant on the first floor and ordered supper, which surprised him by proving uncommonly good.

At half-past nine he was back in 98 again, where he sat reading until midnight—reading and listening, waiting for the house to quiet down for the night, and as determined as ever to sleep in no room but 99.

Another hour passed. The house was quiet now. The lodger in 96 had long since retired; 94 appeared to be unoccupied, and no one had passed along the corridor since half-past eleven.

"Now is about my time," murmured Wylde, closing his book. "I think I will make a move on 99. Probably I shan't succeed in getting in, and if that's the case I'll stay here to-morrow night and try it again."

He softly opened his door, listened for a moment, and then stepped across the corridor, and still more softly tried the door of Room 99.

It was locked, but the fastening seemed to be of the cheapest description, for the door rattled as he shook it. Wylde slipped back into his room, and took from his grip a piece of wire, which he used to clean the brier pipe, to which he was devoted. Bending this and applying it to the keyhole, he soon mastered the lock, threw back the door, and found himself looking into Room 99, dimly illuminated by the moonlight which stole in through the window.

There was nothing unusual in the room; in fact, it was the very twin brother of 98, with its single bed, bureau, chair and washstand. The only difference was the window, which opened just beyond the rear wall of the adjoining house, and overlooked the river. As Wylde glanced out, he could see the lights on the Brooklyn shore, with a Williamsburgh ferryboat heading upstream for its slip at the foot of Broadway.

"This is all right. I stay here," thought the young man. "No one need ever know it, and my curiosity may be gratified, although I doubt it, but at least I shall have the

satisfaction of having humored my fancy, whether anything comes of it or not."

Again he returned to 98, put out the gas and brought over his grip, umbrella, hat and overcoat. Then lighting the gas in 99 but leaving it turned low, he shot the bolt on the inside of the door and threw himself on the bed, not to sleep, but to await for developments. Such at least was his intention, and for perhaps an hour he faithfully adhered to it, part of the time on the bed and then when the sleepy fit came pacing the floor, then throwing himself on the bed again, which last he did once too often, for the drowsy god caught him when he least expected it. He never knew that he had lost himself until he was suddenly aroused by three sharp, distinct raps.

Wylde started up to find himself staring at a figure standing beside the bed.

A woman—a woman in white, young, of tall, symmetrical figure, a face surpassingly beautiful in its molding, and such hair—such astonishing hair!

It was a yellowish-green shade seen in that dim light, and had a curious sheen about it—Wylde could think of nothing but corn-silk as he gazed, half-stupefied—of that and the ravings of poor Randall as described by his friend. The words flashed back upon his memory:

"Still raving about the lady with the green hair."

Wylde tried to pull his wits together to get up to say something, but her eyes were fixed upon him, and for his life he could not have removed his gaze from those eyes of hers, which seemed to shine like two lurid flames between the folds of that wondrous hair, brought down over the forehead and ears in a style strange enough then, but decidedly *a la mode* now.

"Come!" she whispered. "Come! You must come! Dr. Wylde, get up off that bed and follow me!"

Was it hypnotism?

That or something closely akin to it must have influenced Willard Wylde then.

She glided backward between the window and the bed with both hands outstretched toward him, and Wylde simply arose and followed her—followed through an opening in the wall the full size of an ordinary door, which he had not seen when he examined the room.

He knew he was doing it—he remembered everything—the story of the mysterious disappearances in this room was uppermost in his mind as he did it. And yet he did it just the same and without the power to utter a word.

The instant he crossed the threshold the figure vanished and all was darkness. The spell was broken, but too late for a retreat. The panel behind him closed with a snap. Wylde heard it, but before he could turn he was suddenly pushed forward into a blaze of light.

Utterly confounded, Wylde just stood and stared.

He was standing, surrounded by iron bars which reached above his head, looking between them into what appeared to be a chemist's laboratory, with its crucibles and muffles, its flasks, beakers and bottles, all so familiar to him in his student days.

Just beyond the bars was a long bench, beside which stood an elderly man, with gray whiskers and bald, shiny head, wearing a greasy dressing-gown, and busily shaking an orange-colored liquid in a flask over an alcohol lamp. His back was turned to Wylde, and he seemed intent upon his work and wholly oblivious to the young man's presence, until suddenly placing the flask in a rest, he turned and faced the prisoner behind the bars.

And such a face! Cold, hard, stern, unyielding, not one soft line of sympathy upon it. Hungarian, perhaps; foreign certainly, but the voice spoke good English, when it said:

"Good-evening, doctor. I presume you are somewhat disturbed to find yourself in my laboratory. I am busy for the moment, working down this solution of bichromate of manganese. Just amuse yourself by trying to escape, until I am through. They all have to do it, and you may as well get through with it at once."

To do justice to Wylde's feelings, as this strange being turned from him, and again taking the flask in his hand, began shaking it over the flame, would be to attempt the impossible. Enough to say that his coolness did not desert him; now that the baleful influence of those terrible eyes was removed, Wylde's will was all his own.

"I have already tried the wall behind me," he quietly said. "If it is not made of iron it is of something just as hard; as for this cage, I presume whoever made it intended that it should be secure."

"You are right," replied the old man without looking around. "Just a moment, doctor, and I will attend to your case; the precipitate is falling and it is necessary for me to watch the method of crystallization. There! It is done. Now then, my friend! First, who am I?"

"Not knowing, I couldn't say," replied Wylde with the same studied calmness; "but may I ask how you know me?"

"Assuredly. I don't know you. I read your name on your grip in Room 99. You chose to paint doctor before it, so I assume that you *are* a doctor, of what I neither know nor care. It may be medicine, law, divinity, horses or corns, it is all one to me, you will serve my purpose just as well."

"And that purpose?"

"Young man, you are cool. Usually I have to deal with prayers, pleadings, terror, rage——"

"Enough. Come to the point, please!" broke in Wylde. "I know all about the disappearances in Room 99. I undertook to investigate this mysterious business, and I seem likely to succeed; be good enough to explain as quickly as possible what your purpose is."

"My purpose," replied the old man, fixing his cold eyes upon Wylde, "is to investigate you."

"Your explanation explains nothing. Who are you?"

"To another I should not answer, but your frankness demands its equivalent. Look at me. I am Klix—the great Klix."

"Ah! The doctor next door. I saw your sign."

The old man stamped his foot in rage. "Saw my sign!" he roared. "Ha! And this is fame! Surely you can be no doctor. I am Klix—Klix, on the brain!"

"Stop! I remember! A dry German work in six volumes dated forty years back! You wrote that?"

"I did. It is my work. It is the only complete treatise on the brain ever published. Swedenborg's ponderous tome is mere child's prattle in comparison. Huxley——"

"Never mind about Huxley. Dr. Klix, I have heard of your work, but I never read it and probably never shall. Nothing of German goes in this country any more."

The old man gave a contemptuous sniff.

"It is not for such as you," he said, "but still I like you. I'm glad you have come. You are different from the others; to vivisect the brain of a coward, a fool, a drunkard or one afflicted with any other form of mental weakness is something I have already tried many times, but yours will be different. In your case I may succeed in finding the seat of the *ego*, the thinking principle, in other words, what fools and fanatics term the soul."

"Ha, my friend!" he continued, as Wylde stared at him between the bars, "your face pales and well it may. Know your fate! I want the upper half of both hemispheres of your cerebrum! I have immediate use for them, to work up material for the sixty-second chapter of my coming work on the human brain now approaching com-

pletion. I presume you will offer no objection to partin-with this slice of your anatomy. If you are really a doctor you must know that should the operation be skillfully performed you will still live; muscular power will still remain to you; your intelligence will be sufficient to enable you to perform the offices of nature, to eat, sleep, find your way from one place to another and things of that sort. In short, you will stand about on the plane of a well-preserved idiot. You will become an animal, and all in the interest of science. One thing more; I shall administer no anæsthetic—such is not my purpose. I can best study your cerebrum in a state of high mental excitement; such a state as you are rapidly approaching now as you stand there with your eyes starting out of your head with horror grasping those bars which will not yield. Come! Come! Come to the operating table! The sooner the better! Come now!"

Higher and higher grew the pitch of his voice as he pronounced these concluding words.

He had not over-described the sensations of his victim.

Horror uncontrollable had seized Wylde at last. He shook the bars and shouted out one frantic appeal for mercy—a despairing cry for help.

Useless! He knew it, too.

He felt that he was dealing with a madman—an enthusiast—a crank.

"That's right—that's right! Work yourself up!" cried Dr. Klix. "Beautiful! Do it again! Shout once more!"

At the same instant he stamped his foot violently upon the floor, and a sudden and overpowering electric current shot through poor Wylde, racking him from head to foot, and reducing him to a state of entire unconsciousness. When a sense of his surroundings returned he lay strapped down upon an operating table, with the doctor standing beside a small stand upon which a lamp with a powerful reflector had been placed, the light striking full upon Wylde's cranium. By the side of the lamp lay numerous glittering instruments—knives of curious shapes, scissors, probes, etc., the uses of which the young physician knew only too well.

Wylde stared at all this dumbly. He could not speak.

But Dr. Klix could and did.

"So you have come to life again!" he began. "Good! You yielded to the shock beautifully. No kicking, no struggles—that's the animal—you are a man. The last one I had out of 99 made me no end of trouble. He even refused to die after I was through with him, so I let him go after his head was healed. I may let you go, or I may keep you here in this house to study the effect of my operation, or you may die. It really makes little difference which."

Then as Wylde did not respond, he went on:

"Before I begin and you lose your higher consciousness, let me satisfy your curiosity about that room. The Benson House was formerly a factory; it was altered into its present shape some years ago. I don't know who built that secret door, nor why, but I happened to find it, and I have utilized it to furnish me with living subjects. That, doctor, is the full explanation of the mystery of Room 99."

It was explanation enough for Wylde. All chance of escape seemed to have passed, and as the young man lay there much of the horror of his desperate situation seemed to have left him. He found himself unable to think of it. He could scarcely follow Dr. Klix as he rattled on; his mind wandered back to his boyhood days; scenes and faces long forgotten seemed to flit before him; the room seemed filled with people, and among them his bewildered brain showed him the faces of many who had long been dead.

Now the doctor ceased to speak, and turned to the bench where Wylde had first seen him. Again the alcohol lamp was lighted, and a large flask containing a colorless liquid was placed in the rest.

For a moment Dr. Klix watched its ebullition and then seemingly satisfied turned his face toward Wylde and began to talk.

"The time has come," he said. "As soon as that flask thoroughly boils I shall proceed to the operation. The extraction of your cerebrum will be reserved until the last; my first move will be to examine the posterior corner of the lateral ventrical. Have no fear. I am able to perform this operation with perfect safety; you will surely recover from its effects. I am the creator of the great truth that the hippocampus minor is not peculiar to man as formerly taught. It was I who explained to Professor Huxley—heavens! It boils already—more than boils! What carelessness! I——"

He had seized the flask and attempted to raise it from the flames, but too late!

In the midst of his self-satisfied reflections the flask exploded; its contents broke into flame and scattered right and left.

With a cry of profound agony Dr. Klix clapped his hands to his face and dropped like a stone, while Wylde, with staring eyes and wildly beating heart, saw the floor, the bench, the heavy curtains at the windows and the clothing of the fallen man burst into a blaze.

At the same instant a scream rang out; the door flew open and "the lady with the green hair" burst into the room.

"Father! Father!" she shouted. "Dead! Thank God! The day of this evil house is done!"

So much Wylde heard, so much he saw but no more, for in the same moment the break came.

Faint, or swoon—call it what you will—he knew no more until he found himself lying on a lounge in the back room behind the prescription desk at the corner drug-store, with several men around him.

"He's all right," said one, as he opened his eyes; "something falling from the burning house must have struck him."

"By the way," said another, "did you hear if Miss Klix got out all safe? I mean the girl who dyed her hair green to be odd."

"Certainly she did," was the reply; "but the old doctor must have been dead before his daughter got into the room after the explosion—at least, she thinks so, but she had no time to investigate; it was all she could do to get out alive."

Had she time to take him from the operating table and drag him to the street?

Dr. Wylde always thought so, but he never knew, for he never saw "the lady with the green hair" afterward—never heard of her—never wants to.

When at last he left the drug-store, having told a story according with the remark he overheard, he pushed his way through the crowd, with one hasty glance at the ruined house of Dr. Klix.

The Benson House was scorched, and the guests badly scared, and the next day it was reported in the papers that one of them was missing, the name given being the fictitious one Wylde had signed to the register.

But Wylde never explained; he never even returned to claim his grip and let the clerk know that he still lived. He felt no further interest in the Benson House. He had solved the mystery of "Room 99."

Ed Mott, the well-known author, contributes a story for No. 18, out in two weeks.

THE SOUVENIR CORKSCREW

By CAMPBELL STEWART

FOR two days our train had been speeding through the broad prairies of the West. I had finished my novel the day before, and unfortunately there was nothing in the smoking-car's slender library that had any interest for me. So I sat gazing out upon the endless plain, which seemed to rotate upon some point in the distant horizon. In my imagination it became a giant roulette wheel, and on it I won imaginary fortunes. My thoughts took this turn because a friend had recently lost a fortune—yes, yes, at Monte Carlo—and I had not yet recovered from my stern resolve to eschew the attractions of the goddess of the green cloth and confine my gaming propensities to an occasional bet on the ball games.

My mind rambled on in this fashion till supper-time. I am such a thin, dyspeptic old duffer that my meals, far from being happy privileges, have long been painful necessities. But this supper was one to be long remembered, for it brought forth a story of unusual interest.

Like a flash I drew a knife and drove it through his outstretched hand, cards and all, pinning him to the table.

When the wine was brought on the waiter, by some oversight, left his corkscrew lying on the table. It was a common one, but it attracted the attention of the portly, distinguished-looking gentleman sitting opposite me, who slowly drew something from his pocket, and said:

"Gentlemen, that corkscrew there on the table doubtless serves its purpose well enough, but I would not exchange this one for ten thousand such."

With that he showed us a shiny screw folded against a broad silver handle, which he opened like a watch case and passed around the table. As each saw what the handle contained I noticed looks of wonderment cast at its owner, as if an explanation was wanted. When it reached me I became eager to hear the story behind that curious corkscrew, for in the handle, protected by a thin glass, lay a playing card—rather, I should say, a small piece of one, half-cut, half-torn. It was stained a dark brown, but after more careful scrutiny I succeeded in discovering a figure seven in the corner, and below it a trefoil.

Certainly, I thought, a man would never show such a thing as that, unless he were willing to give the story, so I said:

"That means more to you than to us. Can't you tell us why?"

He smiled, and replied: "Well, I might, yes. I forgot that the yarn would be necessary, but now that I'm in for it, I don't mind trying to entertain you for a while. But let's go where we can smoke."

We proceeded without more delay to the smoker, (there were four of us) and soon had the traditional "blue cloud floating over our heads." After the usual twisting, and hauling, and tilting of chairs, we found comfortable positions, and waited. It had begun to rain—one of those dismal November rains—and the splashing on the windows, the fast gathering darkness, and the general dreariness of the sodden landscape, made the bright interior of the car seem doubly cheerful. We puffed our cigars in silence for a few minutes, then our friend began:

"In '59 I was employed by a New York firm as a special agent for California. It was a position of considerable responsibility for a young man of twenty-four, as the company's interests involved several hundred thousand or more a year, but at the expense of every hour not spent in bed, and endless hard work, I had for two years brought my employers satisfactory results. My salary was not large. It should have been much larger, although I tried every way to secure an increase. Failing in that, however, I decided that if my salary could not be made to fit my work, I would make the work fit the salary, and enjoy some of the advantages around me. With that end in view,

I joined a club—*the* club, in fact, as there was but one club in the city—and spent my evenings there instead of in the office planning business.

"At the club we played cards, and there were frequently some pretty stiff games put up; but I was too cautious and careful of my reputation to take part in them, and so tried to be satisfied with less expensive recreation. For a year or more I played about even, while my business did not suffer appreciably. Then I began to devote more time to cards and less to business, and soon began to lose steadily until in a few months my losses amounted to more than a year's salary. But still I played, oftener and for larger stakes, when one night I had a 'streak' and won twelve hundred dollars more than my previous losses.

"You can imagine my elation better than I can describe it. But if I could have foreseen how the influence of that successful game would lead me to the very edge of absolute ruin, gambling would have lost all its charms. The absence of such foresight caused the one adventure of my life.

"The next evening I was engaged in a quiet little game, which seemed very dull after the excitement of the previous night, when a waiter brought me a note something like this:

"'Can you join Peaks, Brown, Dilworthy, and myself, in Room 4? A. O. JUDD.'

"These men were all cool, steady players, noted for high games, and for a long time I had possessed a sneaking desire to be taken into their circle. Like a silly boy I felt immensely flattered by the invitation, and very quickly found some excuse to hasten to Room 4.

"Before going farther let me say something about the men I found there.

"Brown owned big plantations and scores of slaves down in Arkansas, and being a bachelor, roamed about the country spending a week here, or a month there as fancy dictated. Dilworthy was a cattleman, not immensely wealthy, but the luckiest dog I have ever seen. Judd bore the proud title of "Colonel." He had been minister to Mexico and while there married a rich Mexican of high family. There never was a couple more desperately in love than they—so desperately in fact, that her death a year later at the birth of a daughter almost cost him his reason. He resigned his post, left the child with relatives, and spent ten years in the States before he could bear the sight of his own offspring. Then he sent for her, and from that time, eight years ago, all his attention had been devoted to the education of Miss Anita Judd. Peaks was a junior in the firm of Hall, Peaks & Son, clothing manufacturers of Cincinnati, and was spending a month's vacation in our city at Judd's invitation, who was an old friend of his father. He was scarcely older than myself, a quiet, gentlemanly fellow. I subsequently learned that but for the events of that evening he would have been Colonel Judd's son-in-law.

"Well, we began to play. Brown dealt, and my first card was a king, then a six, a four, and two more kings. I laid the cards on the table before me, big ones on the bottom, and when the draw was dealt discarded two from the top of my pile. A hasty glance at the cards I had drawn revealed king and ten, which were placed carefully on the others and left there, for I knew I would give myself away if I looked at them too much.

"On my left sat Brown and Peaks; on the right, Dilworthy and Judd. It was Judd's bet, and he put up a hundred, which Dilworthy raised to four. Then I startled them all by putting up fourteen hundred dollars. However, the raise was seen except by Brown, and Peaks called.

"Very deliberately I spread out my cards, and without looking at them, commenced to rake in the chips when Dilworthy caught my arm.

"'Hold on, young man,' said he; 'you can't do that on a pair of kings when I hold a queen full, which I think is the best hand out.' With that he took the pile, and I looked for my picture cards.

"Well, you can imagine how I felt when I saw that my four kings were but two. The others had been carelessly discarded.

"After that I played like a child. My nerves got unstrung, and I poured whisky down my throat till I could hardly see the cards. I called small bets on first-class hands, and raised on poor ones to such an extent that in the next two hours my losses grew to more than fifteen thousand dollars. That meant ruin and sure disgrace, but still I stayed.

"Judd had been uneasy about me for some time, though he did not know that the money I was losing was not my own, and finally he said kindly:

"'Look here, George, you must stop this. Come to me in a day or two and we'll fix things up, but for your own sake go home to bed.'

"I knew what he meant to do, and grasped at the opportunity as the last despairing hope, but as I neared the door, Peaks remarked in an undertone: 'He seems to be about done up.' It was not intended for my ears, I knew, which made it all the worse. To my fevered mind the mere thought of giving up the fight was disgrace, and when I realized what Peaks said I was furious. So there were once more five in the game.

"Out of deference to me the bets were made smaller for a while until I began to cool off and play with more judgment. But that did me little good, for my employer's money steadily left me, as before, though none of the others suspected whose it was, and then I came to this decision: I would risk everything on the first good hand; if it won, I would quit, if it lost, a bullet would end everything then and there.

"My determination grew firmer as the game proceeded and poor hands still fell to me, until I was ready to give up in despair, when Peaks dealt me the four, five, six, seven of diamonds, and the seven of clubs. We had made a jack-pot several hands before, and there was now in it something like five hundred dollars. You can judge how anxious I was to have it opened ahead of me, for if I drew but one after passing they would never bet high against me."

"Judd passed, then Dilworthy announced that it would cost seventy-five dollars to draw cards. Of course we all went in and I put up my money with feverish eagerness, for I felt intuitively that my chance had come.

"Judd drew three cards, Dilworthy stood pat, and as Peaks looked inquiringly at me I tossed the seven of clubs across the table and took one, trembling like a leaf all the while. I could not find courage to look at it, but laid it down before me till the rest drew. Brown called for three, and as the dealer slipped off five for himself I heaved a sigh of relief and raised my card. It was the eight of diamonds!

"When I realized my good luck I could stand it no longer and burst out crying like a baby, completely powerless to control myself. After some minutes I exerted all my will power and regained my composure sufficiently to know that the infinitesimal chance of two straight flushes being drawn in one deal made my hand practically a sure thing, but it was also practically worthless unless the rest of them held something pretty good. There was not much time for such thoughts as these, however, for

the betting began, with Dilworthy up two hundred, Judd having passed.

"Now another problem presented itself: How could the bets be forced high enough to do justice to my hand? I had but an instant to decide, and believing a large raise would bring a call before a smaller one, I raised Dilworthy's two to six. Judd gave me a pitying look, which I answered with a glare like a tiger's.

"Brown thought it over for a minute and threw down his cards, but Peaks, cool as an iceberg, raised me two thousand. His coolness made me frantic.

"'Five thousand better!' I shouted, rising from my seat and leaning over the table.

"Peaks tilted back his chair, propped his feet on the table, and drawled out:

"'Two thousand better.'

"Then I began to get frightened. He knew I could not bluff, the thought flashed through my mind, and yet he raises. With that my previous resolution came back to me, and I fairly yelled:

"'You're raised three thousand.'

"Don't forget that Dilworthy had a good hand. He quietly met each raise and waited for the next one, though made none himself.

"I suppose the other fellows thought I had lost my mind, but my attention was too firmly fixed on the man from Cincinnati, to take any notice of them.

"That worthy gentleman sneered when he heard my last raise. You've lost enough for to-night, I think. I'll just see you and let Dilworthy call it."

"'All right,' said he, 'what do you hold?'

"'Something that can't be beaten,' I panted, 'a straight flush!'

"Dilworthy laid down four jacks.

"Peaks looked at his cards, saying as he did so: 'Is that straight flush of yours better than this?' and lowered his hand till it rested on the table, still holding the cards.

"I looked. Clubs—seven, eight, nine, ten, and jack!

"How long my eyes were on those cursed clubs, I don't know. But all the time my brain was clearing almost miraculously, and I was as cool as I am now, in spite of my anger. Then slowly reaching to my coat pocket, like a flash I drew a knife and drove it through his outstretched hands, cards and all, pinning him to the table.

"The spectators were thunderstruck, but before a word could be pronounced, I said calmly:

"'Mr. Peaks, that seven of clubs is my discard!'

"He sat as if stunned, pale as death, while the blood slowly spread out on the table. Then, with an oath, he jerked out the blade and sprang at me, hissing through his clenched teeth:

"'You lie!'

"Of course, we were at once seized and firmly held, though Peaks struggled like a madman. When he quieted down, no one spoke a word for several minutes, and so still was the room that we could hear his heavy breathing.

"Brown broke the silence. 'This is a most extraordinary charge,' said he, 'but nevertheless true, for I saw Mr. Peaks pick up a card while George was crying. I meant to denounce him at once, but it was impossible for me to believe that he would cheat, and I knew you would not listen to such a thing. The outcome proves that the gentleman deliberately committed fraud. I suggest that he be sent to his hotel immediately.'

"'Your suggestion is a good one'—it was Judd that spoke—'but you forget that he may stop payment on his checks. A man low enough to cheat in a game like this, where a fortune is at stake, is low enough to repudiate his just debts. We would better keep him here till George draws his money.'

"'Perhaps,' I began, 'that will not be necessary. Let's hear what he has to say for himself.'

"What Peaks said I cannot now repeat exactly, but we learned that he had seen my card as I threw it across the table, and when he found his hand lacking that very card of being a straight flush the temptation was too much for him. While I was boo-hooing he thought no one was watching and carelessly picked it up, never taking a thought as to what the consequences might be. He begged us to keep the affair a secret, and assured us that his checks would be honored.

"We promised faithfully not to make known his connection with the incident, and for years the subject was never mentioned. Even now I used fictitious names in telling the story.

"My winnings in that pot amounted to about twenty-four thousand dollars, enough to put me on my feet in good shape. Dilworthy and Peaks could stand their losses, for they had been winning from me throughout the game. What became of the latter I cannot now say; not even whether he is alive or dead.

"Before leaving the room I secured the piece of that memorable card which so aroused your curiosity, as a souvenir of what proved to be my last game of poker. A few years ago I had it put in this corkscrew. I rather enjoy looking at it now."

As the gentleman finished his story I drew a long breath and glanced around the little circle of hearers. The man on my right seemed to be paying no attention to the speaker, but was gazing abstractedly into a pocket-book—which lay on his knee. Presently he looked up, and placing something from his pocket-book on his open hand he held it out to us. There in the palm I saw a thin white scar about an inch and a quarter long, and beside it lay a piece of a seven of clubs!

"That, too," said he, "was my last game of poker!"

A new detective serial will soon begin. It is filled with exciting incidents. Watch for it!

SKULL OF SLAIN MAN FOUND

WHAT is believed to be the skull of Norman Fitzsimmons, wealthy Santa Clara County rancher, who mysteriously disappeared seventy years ago, was uncovered in the hills beyond Livermore by Sheriff Frank Barnet of Alameda County, Cal. Barnet was conducting an investigation into the finding of the decomposed body of a man about forty years old April 2 in the Mocha Creek when he came upon the skull.

Tradition relates that in the pioneer days of the State a feud existed in the San Antone Valley in Santa Clara County between two farmers, one of whom was Dan Deane and the other Fitzsimmons. According to the report, one day Fitzsimmons disappeared, following a fight between the rival factions, and nothing further was heard of him.

Barnet believes that the skull uncovered is that of the missing farmer, and has written a letter to relatives in the East telling of the find. In the meantime a further investigation will be made for other evidences of identity.

THE RENEGADE DETECTIVE

A Serial Story

By RANDOLPH BADGER

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FERRYBOAT

JAMES THORN had recovered, and was out of the hospital on the night that Delano Joslin attempted to culminate his project entirely.

For a year past Thorn had been a changed man, not only in his dispirited appearance, but the increased acrimony and reticence of his nature. Some misfortune seemed to have befallen him and he grieved in silence. He had formerly lived somewhere in Brooklyn in the bosom of his family, but his wife and son died soon after each other, and his daughter married, and as he was left alone in the world, he had broken up his lonely home, and lived principally at hotels when not active. He had been abiding at the Grand Central just before his illness, and now went back, and re-engaged his room. After that he reported at headquarters, and telling the inspector that he was engaged on a case, he went out. Night had fallen; as he was in a pensive mood and had nothing particular to do, he turned down a side street and entered a theater, where he sat for a while watching a pretty comedy-drama, when suddenly his attention was attracted toward a somewhat dignified-looking gentleman, beside whom sat a slim individual. The latter personage seemed to be intent upon the play, and was apparently paying no attention to the old gentleman.

He wore a plaid suit, an enormity of collar, had slick yellow hair, large ears, a long nose and a huge mouth, over which was a small fringe meant for a mustache. His face was cadaverous, his eyes watery and bulging, and there was a nervous, restless movement about them that betrayed a fidgety temperament.

These two people sat several rows ahead of Thorn, on the end of the aisle, and directly in front of one of the side mirrors.

It was during the intermission in which the usual number of red-nosed libators, who always feel dryest during a performance, and take special pains to let every one see their weakness, had gone out *to get heels put on their shoes*, that Thorn happened to glance at the mirror.

He saw both of the personages reflected there, and noted their faces.

A strange little by-play was in progress.

The dignified gentleman was reading his programme.

The slim individual was picking his pocket, and just then secured his watch.

All this was portrayed in the mirror.

Thorn smiled, and rising from his seat, he walked over to the side of the slim man.

"The chief witness against Ralph," he muttered. "He's at his old tricks again."

Stooping over, he tapped the slim man on the shoulder.

"Nick Barton," he exclaimed, "give him back his watch!"

"Furiation!" exclaimed the slim man, much startled. "Jim Thorn!"

"No one else, Nick."

The dignified gentleman looked at them in surprise.

"What is the matter here, sir?" he asked.

"This crook just relieved you of your watch," said Thorn.

"Eh? What? My watch?" said the other, clapping his hand to his vest pocket; "sure enough! It is gone. And did he steal it?"

"Put your hand in his side coat-pocket and get it," said the detective.

Mr. Barton said nothing. He was dumb with fright.

When the dignified man withdrew his hand from Nick's pocket, he held in it his handsome gold chronometer.

"Why, bless me!" he gasped, "he *did* have it, didn't he?"

"You must be more careful in future, sir," said Thorn.

"So I shall—so I shall. Much obliged to you, sir."

"Will you press a charge against this man?"

"Of course—certainly!"

"Then I will arrest him."

"Do so by all means. He is a public nuisance, and should be punished."

"By heavens, Thorn, you wouldn't jug a fellow, would you?" exclaimed Barton.

"That is my intention, dear boy."

"But I've only just got out after a six months' sentence. This is terrible for me."

"You had no right to commit crime."

"Let me go, Thorn, and I'll reform."

"This looks like it!"

"I couldn't help it. I am hard up, and haven't a friend in the world."

"No criminal has a *real* friend. Why didn't you recommence honestly?"

"Because I couldn't get work; my past record was against me."

"Did you try to gain employment?"

"Yes; but say, let's get out, every one is looking at us."

"All right. You, sir," to the dignified man, "can appear to-morrow against this man, at the district court, at ten o'clock."

"Very well—I shall be there."

Thorn went out with his prisoner.

When they had gone a block from the theater, Barton stopped.

"Thorn," said he, very earnestly, "do you know what you are doing?"

"Of course; I'm taking you to the station-house."

"That is not the worst part of it; you are bringing me to my grave!"

"How do you make that out?"

"Don't you hear how I cough every few minutes?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"It is consumption."

"You don't say so. I never before knew you had it."

"I am in delicate health; my last imprisonment did it for me. If I go in again, I will never come out alive. I will die there."

"That will not be much of a loss to the community."

"Perhaps not; but I do not want to die in prison. I have a wife and children, who look to me for their support. They may starve."

"See here, Barton, what are you driving at—trying to melt me?"

"Not exactly that. I don't want to go to prison."

"How can it be helped?"

"Very easily; you can let me go."

"Impossible; that man is to appear against you to-morrow."

"Let him go to court; if I am not there he will go away again."

"And make me inconsistent with my duty?"

"I can make it an object for you to do so."

"Explain yourself."

"If you accede to liberating me, I will release Ralph Desmond."

"Ah!" said the detective, starting. "You bore false evidence against him?"

"Yes, I did, and Delano Joslin was the man who paid me to do it."

"What was his object to imprison his friend?"

"I will tell you. It was Joslin who forged the check, and after getting Ralph half-drunk, he wanted him to pass the forged check. At the last moment Ralph backed out, and Joslin saw that his dupe meant to give him away. In order to save himself, he called you into the bank as you were passing, and charged Ralph with issuing a forged check. You remember how you arrested him—how as it was for you to do so, but you could do no more than your duty in the sight of the public, and was obliged to take him in. I was paid to swear that I had seen Ralph forge the check. In reality I saw Joslin do it."

"Ah," said the detective, "and Rackstraw—I mean Johnny Bancroft?"

"He and Joslin laid the trap to catch Ralph between them."

"Are you willing to testify to this, Barton?"

"I will if you release me."

"Then you have your liberty."

"What!" cried the thief, joyfully. "Am I really free?"

"Yes—go! I will again renegade myself to save Ralph!"

"God bless you!" exclaimed Barton earnestly. "I will prove true to you."

"If you don't, I will hunt you down, no matter where you may go, and deliver you up to justice. You know I never break my word!"

"Have no uneasiness. Here is my address. You can find me there any time."

Writing it on a piece of paper, he gave it to Thorn.

"Ralph is already out of jail," said the detective, as he took it.

"What!" said the other, in surprise. "Released?"

"No, he escaped. He must be vindicated. I already knew how it was that Joslin got him in trouble, as I heard him confess it, but I want to strengthen the proof of Ralph's innocence with your evidence."

"Oh! Then my mind is easier. I hate to blow on a pal, but as long as you already know the details, I feel that I did not exactly give him away."

"Here is ten dollars for you," said Thorn, handing him a bill. "It will help to keep you out of mischief until you can procure honest employment. I'd like to see you become a better man, Barton, for you are not really at heart a miserable thief."

"You are right, Thorn," said the other, tremulously. "I would be a decent respectable man, if I could, and you can rest assured that I will try hard to get any kind of work in order to reform myself."

"Go, then, and be prepared to hear from me soon."

Barton wrung the detective's hand and hurried away with grateful tears in his eyes. We will add here that in course of time he did become reformed, and always blessed James Thorn for it in his better days.

Meantime, the detective walked on in an agitated frame of mind; he now had sufficient proof to establish the innocence of Ralph Desmond, and he meant to use it as quickly as possible.

Reaching a station of the elevated road, he went up, and purchasing a ticket, he walked through the station, deposited it in the box beside the gateman, and stepped out on the platform.

There were two men waiting there for the next train, and as the electric light fell upon them he recognized Delano Joslin and John Rackstraw!

"Look out!" exclaimed the former, who saw the officer at the same moment. "Here is Thorn! Run or he will have us!"

"Oh!" cried the startled constable.

"Ah!" muttered the detective, "this is lucky."

He ran toward them, but they sprang off of the platform onto the down track. They ran with the speed of the wind, for the detective was close upon them, and they had no desire to be apprehended just then, as they had only just come down from Captain Dan Fulton's house under the impression that they had killed the old man and fastened the guilt upon Ralph Desmond. A short distance up the road was a switch that led around a side street branch of the road, and as they were midway between the station and the bend, a train came rushing up the grade behind Joslin, and another suddenly came around the bend and bore down upon the constable who was running toward it!

Thorn was between the two tracks on the slats, but they terminated a short distance ahead, and he was suddenly forced to stop or fall off into the street close by the flagman's house.

The constable suddenly paused, overcome with horror at his peril, and stood stock-still in his panic, not knowing what to do.

The two trains roared and thundered on, with their fiery headlights reflected far ahead through the darkness, and in an instant Rackstraw was in the broad sheen of brilliant light.

Thorn saw the agonized expression upon his face, and the next moment he beheld the engineer and fireman look out of the cab, and shut off steam to stop the rushing train.

Too late!

The train seemed to dart down upon the poor wretch—then sounded a wild scream of mortal distress, the hissing of steam, a babel of voices of the frightened passengers, then Rackstraw was struck by the cow-catcher, thrown into the air, and went flying down between the tracks and struck the street below with a dull thud! A crowd gathered around him, and the detective shuddered as he sprang on the other track and ran after Joslin. The other train had stopped at the station, and just as the detective jumped on the track in pursuit of Joslin the bell clanged, and it came puffing toward him, gaining speed every moment.

Joslin had witnessed the fate of his companion, and glancing over his shoulder, he saw the detective pursuing him, and a train behind the officer coming on and threatening him with the same fate as Rackstraw. He did not lose his preseence of mind, but stopping at the next post

he came to, he climbed down the girders, caught the post, and down he went, the persistent detective a few yards behind him.

Reaching the street while the detective was clambering down the post, he was overjoyed to see a buggy standing in front of a saloon a short distance off. To spring in, grasp the reins and lash the horse was but the work of a moment, and away he went flying down a side street toward the river.

The detective was wild with chagrin upon seeing this maneuver.

He did not despair, however, for quickly discovering a hack, he jumped in and ordered the driver to pursue he buggy, offering him a large sum to overhaul him. The abman put his half-starved horse to the top of its speed, .nd they went racing after the fugitive at no mean pace.

Joslin had gained several blocks, and after ten minutes' hard driving he reached a ferry. The gates were closed. Throwing aside the reins after checking the panting horse, he ran into the ferry-house, just as Thorn dashed up, paid the hackman, and ran after him. The man was just on the point of closing the inside passage-gate when Thorn ran through and hurried on the boat which the wharfmen were uncabling.

The boat looked deserted, as there were only a few passengers on her at that late hour. Pausing on the deck, he accosted a deck hand:

"Did a man just come on this boat?"

"I didn't see any one just now."

"Who was the last person to come aboard?"

"A young fellow, I thought."

"Describe him."

The deck-hand did so. It tallied with Joslin's appearance.

"That is the man!" said the detective.

"Who is he, sir?"

"A fugitive from the law."

"Ah! you are a detective?"

Thorn nodded.

"Well," said the deck-hand, "he went in the ladies' cabin."

"Thanks!" said Thorn, as he started for the cabin.

The bell tinkled at this moment, and amid the beating of the paddle wheels the ferry-boat moved out of the wharf into the river.

Thorn went through the ladies' cabin without seeing his man, and crossing the front deck, inspected the gentlemen's cabin with like result. Going out in the gangway for horses and vehicles, he looked over the half-door behind which sat the engineer, and asked if Joslin was in there. The man said "No," and he then went through a door and searched the hold and machinery with no better result. Just as he was wondering whether the man was really on board, he saw a companionway stairs leading to the roof, and he ran up.

The night was rather dark, and he hastily ignited his dark-lantern.

The pilot stood alone in his house, his assistant sitting in a chair fast asleep. Thorn convinced himself that his man was not there, and having flashed the rays of his lantern over all the rest of the deck, he approached the after pilot-house.

Just as he came within a few feet of it he saw a dark figure step out from behind it, and an instant later there was a vivid flash, a sharp report, and a bullet grazed his shoulder, causing him to drop his lantern, which was instantly extinguished.

"Ha, Joslin!" he exclaimed, "I have you cornered."

"I am not yet in your clutches!" hissed the other fiercely.

"You had better drop that pistol and submit quietly."

"Never!"

"So much the worse for you!" exclaimed the detective.

"Hello, there!" cried the pilot's assistant, looking out of a window, and striving to see through the darkness who made the noise. "Who is that?"

"Come here!" called Thorn. "Help me. I have a murderer here!"

"Thunder!" ejaculated the other. "I'm goin' out, Joe, to see what's up."

The boat by this time had gained the middle of the stream, and the door of the pilot-house opened, and the assistant ran out.

"You get back there!" cried Joslin furiously, "or I'll make it hot for you!"

"A murderer, eh?" said the man. "Hold on—I'll help you!"

"Are you going to mind your own business?" demanded Joslin, threateningly.

"Not much," replied the man.

"You can take this, then, for your trouble!"

He raised his pistol quickly and fired at the pilot.

With a loud cry the man reeled and fell upon the deck.

"Hang your audacity!" exclaimed Thorn; "you've probably killed him."

"Oh, no; I only wounded him," was the cool rejoinder.

"I'll stop your pistol practice in a moment," said Thorn.

He felt in his pocket for his own weapon; unfortunately, though, he did not have it with him. A cry of mortification escaped him.

"Good!" said the other, who was watching him intently. "You haven't got it with you, have you? I'll settle you now."

"Down with the rascal!" cried the other pilot, looking out his window, for he did not dare to leave the wheel. "Down with him! Look out!"

Bang! went the pistol.

Thorn was watching him, and just fell quick enough to escape.

Joslin raised the hammer and pulled the trigger again.

The pistol did not explode, however, for all the cartridges were consumed.

He threw the weapon down, uttering a vile curse.

Thorn chuckled at his discomfiture and ran toward him.

The rascal was prepared for some such onslaught, for he hastily stooped over a rack, and catching up one of the fire-buckets, he struck the detective on the head with it, and sent him staggering back.

Taking advantage of Thorn's stunned condition, he quickly fell upon him and began dragging him toward the edge of the roof.

Vaguely realizing his danger, Thorn struggled with all his power to break loose from the deadly clutch the rascal had upon him.

Struggle as hard as he might, Thorn could do nothing, for the other was incited as much by desperation as by hate and fear, for he knew that the detective could now convict him.

In a moment they had reached the edge of the roof, the black river flowing beneath, and a broad white track of foam in the wake of the boat. With a superhuman effort Joslin caught his victim by the throat and hurled him over the side. Down went the detective, and an instant later he sank beneath the dark water. Joslin then ran down the stairs and hid himself until the boat ran into the pier on the other side.

"Now," he exclaimed exultantly, as he ran ashore, "my path is clear. I must get rid of those two women until the fortune of Dan Fulton is mine, and then—good-by to New York!"

* * * * * * *

Upon reaching the Red Shield Tavern, Joslin found the place in an uproar the next day. Captain Spanker had come to the tavern with the news that Captain Fulton had been foully murdered.

Finding the captain, with a look of deep concern the pseudo Harry Fulton, under the sympathetic glances of every one, drew him aside.

"My God, sir," said he, "what is this I hear—my father murdered?"

"Ay—ay, my lad, if so be as you are a son o' the cappen's."

"I am his son. Tell me the details—quick!"

"It was a foul deed," said the captain gravely. "Perfeckly terribul."

"Who was the villain who did it?"

"Ah! he, poor wretch, is dead."

"Who caught him?"

"Nobody. He laid on the floor beside the corpse, stiff and stark."

"And the murder——"

"He shot poor Cappen Dan. I was there all night."

"Has any one got charge of the house?"

"No one. Somebody said you was the magistrate o' this deestrict."

"So I am. Oh, this is horrible! Poor father—dead!"

"Poor young man—he takes it hard!" they murmured.

"Come—come, my hearty! Cheer up!" said the captain cheerily.

"Ah, sir. I am half mad with grief," replied the hypocrite, with a fresh burst of grief. "My misfortune is great indeed, and it saddens me to think that I must perform the usual offices of my duty in this case. I will have to seal up the house pending an investigation."

"Never mind, sir," replied the captain consolingly. "I'll send to the city authorities if——"

"No, no," replied the other hastily, and in great alarm. "I will attend to it."

Shortly thereafter the magistrate left the tavern, and going over to the manor, shadowed by Jigger, who had carried out the rôle of Captain Spanker to perfection, he ordered all the servants out, and locked up the house. This done, he returned to the hotel and wrote a note, ostensibly for the coroner, but in reality directed to Camille Desmond, at Brierly.

Changing his disguise to that of a farmer's assistant, Jigger was given the note to deliver, Joslin paying him to do the job, and set off on his errand. Upon going around a turnpike that hid him from the view of those in the tavern, the detective opened the note and read it:

"MRS. DESMOND—As you are perhaps aware, your husband was found beside the corpse of Captain Dan Fulton, apparently dead. This was a mistake, for I found that he was only stupid from some cause, and hastily concealed him. Had they discovered that life was not extinct, he would be hung for the murder of old Dan, as the evidence points to him as the culprit who was actuated by sordid avarice. If you care to join your husband, and fly hence with him, come to the Red Shield to-night and enter a carriage which I will have in waiting for you, with which you will be driven to Ralph. To prove that no treachery is intended, you may fetch Chiquita with you as a companion. D. J."

"A pretty trap, but I can outwit him!" commented the detective.

Reaching Briery, he was ushered into the parlor, where he met Camille.

"What is it you wish, my good fellow?" she asked.

"I've got a note fur yer, mum," said he.

Camille took the note and read it through

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, when she finished. "Can this be true?"

"No, mum," said the messenger.

"What do *you* know about it?" he asked sharply.

"Everything."

"Did he tell you?"

"No. I read the note."

"You had no right to read this!"

He threw aside his disguise smilingly and asked:

"Didn't I, Mrs. Desmond?"

"What! Mr. Jigger?"

"Your servant, madam."

"What does this portend—more trouble for me?"

"No. I am your friend. I wish to help you."

"How can you do that—my poor husband is——"

"No," he interrupted. "The note is a lie; I know Delano Joslin!"

"Ah! But my husband——"

"Have no fear—he is safe——"

"And Mr. Fulton?"

"Is alive and well!"

"Then what does this note mean?"

"It is a decoy to abduct you."

"Horrible!"

"You may well say so. This is the last move in his game."

"Why have you changed—I thought you were his friend?"

"On the contrary—I am his worst enemy, if he only knew it. What trouble I once caused you was only done for effect!"

"What shall I now do?"

"Aid me in a plan I have formed. You must retain the utmost secrecy."

"Rely upon me for that. What else?"

"Nothing, except—leave the rest to me."

"Is my husband safe?"

"Yes. I will prove Joslin's guilt, and then restore your husband to you."

"Thank God!"

"Will you make a deposition of all the evidence you have against Joslin?"

"Willingly."

"Then excuse me. I have got Alexander Splofford, the notary, with me."

Going out into the hall, he conducted the notary into the room.

In a few moments she had deposed all that she witnessed of the attending circumstances to the murder of Arthur Desmond; and when it was duly sworn to, signed, sealed and witnessed, the detective pocketed it, and bade her write an answer to Joslin's note. It was couched in the following terms:

"I will be at the rendezvous to-night at nine o'clock.
"C. D."

Jigger dismissed the notary and returned to Joslin, to whom he gave the reply, and then secretly making his way to his room, he resumed his disguise as Captain Spanker. Upon reaching the tap-room again he encountered a bewhiskered individual who looked like a soldier.

Gazing at him sharply a moment, Jigger glided up to him, and seizing him by the arm, he drew him aside.

A quick-whispered conversation followed, which was hardly finished when Joslin entered, and they quickly separated, the soldierly man leaving the tavern and Captain Spanker keeping his eye on his prey.

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

BASEBALL FOR PRISONERS

American prisoners held in twelve camps in Germany will be supplied with baseball equipments, President Ban Johnson of the American League announced the other day. He said the paraphernalia will be shipped through the medium of the Red Cross, which had advised him that Germany had consented to the plan.

20 YEARS FOR $4 ROBBERY

Twenty years in Sing Sing was the sentence received recently by E. B. Wisher, convicted of highway robbery in Orange County, N. Y. His crime netted him only $46.

Wisher, who was sentenced by Justice Tompkins, was convicted of waylaying Edward Jordan, of Goshen, knocking him unconscious, and then robbing him. When arrested Wisher was on probation for burglary.

CHINESE TYPEWRITER HAS SYMBOLS

A large typewriting company has begun the manufacture of an apparatus for writing Chinese, which is shown in the *Popular Mechanics Magazine*. The fact that the Chinese have no alphabet made the problem of designing such a typewriter most difficult. In place of type bars are two cylinders, each containing 4,200 Chinese characters, including 1,327 radicals, or symbols, which, variously combined, make an almost unlimited number of words.

TRAINS MONKEYS AS HOUSEHOLD SERVANT

Mrs. Phillips Livingston, of Cleveland, Ohio, who arrived recently from South America, brought back a monkey from Colombia as a solution to the servant problem. "I am going to train my new servant to fetch Mr. Livingston's smoking-jacket, swing on the chandeliers and turn out the lights, rescue fugitive collar buttons and many other such things that will make a good servant out of a monkey, and a monkey out of the average domestic," said Mrs. Livingston.

BRAZIL IN WAR

Because not much has been heard about Brazil's share in the war, it must not be presumed that she is doing little or nothing. As a matter of fact, conscription is in force and every possible preparation is being made to strike a heavy blow in Europe. Brazil's ships are patrolling the coast of South America and other ships have gone to European waters, where they are operating with the Allied navies. The Brazilian navy includes several dreadnoughts of good speed and heavy offensive power.

WORK OF BRITISH TRANSPORTS

The British mercantile marine, up to the close of last year, had transported overseas under the guardianship of the British Navy, a total of 13,000,000 troops; and in the course of this vast operation the loss of life, due to enemy action, was only 2,700 men. In addition to these troops, 25,000,000 tons of supplies had also been transported overseas. Here is one rather conclusive answer to the cuckoo cry of the German propagandist: "Where is the British Fleet?"

SIGN RECALLS LAFAYETTE

A sign finely carved, which formerly hung on the Johnson Tavern in Libson, Conn., and bearing on its face the inscription, "Refreshments for Man and Beast," with the date of its construction, 1768, and a finely carved representation of an elm tree, which formerly stood in front of the old tavern, was recently unearthed in an attic at the home of A. F. Read here. The tavern formerly sheltered Lafayette when he passed through this country after the Revolution.

SAW SON IN MOVIES

Although Mr. and Mrs. William F. Linck arrived too late at Jersey City, N. J., to see Homer Linck, their son, before he left for France, they had the consolation of seeing him in motion pictures.

Mr. and Mrs. Linck left Jeffersonville, Ind., one day recently to say good-by, but their son had sailed before they reached Jersey City. They then went to a New York motion picture show and recognized their son among some marching soldiers on a film.

OSTRICH FARM FAILS.

At the suit of the First State Bank of Dalmatia a levy has been made on the real estate of the African Ostrich Farm and Feather Company at Bloomsburg, Pa. Thus comes the end of the dream of William H. Hile, its promoter, to raise ostriches on an extensive scale. More than $100,000 of investors' money, much of it in small sums, was lost in the venture. About two years ago it was sold at receiver's sale and the new firm, made up of old stockholders, hoped to save something, but it again proved a failure.

MYSTERY FIRE

Mrs. J. Cadmore, of Berkeley, Cal., is very nervous as a result of an accident which nearly burned her house.

Mrs. Cadmore was sitting in the parlor of her home when a newly purchased easy-chair began to smoke and then burst into flames.

She fainted and recovered in time to turn in the fire alarm. The evidence was consumed when the department arrived, but it is believed that the fire was caused by spontaneous combustion in the packing of the chair. The damage was $25.

HOW TO TELL

A lady advertised for a man to work in her garden, and two men applied for the job. While she was interviewing them on the lawn she noticed that her mother on the piazza was making signs to her to choose the shorter of the two men, which she finally did. When the ladies were alone the daughter said:

"Why did you signal me to choose the shorter man, mother? The other one had a much better face."

"Face!" returned the old lady. "When you are picking out a man to work in your garden you want to go by his overalls. If they're patched on the knees, you want him: but if they're patched on the seat, you don't."

BALE OF STRAW SAVES LIFE

A bale of straw which he was getting for a customer, saved the life of Perry B. Ulsh when ten tons of bran were dislodged and came tumbling down over him. Ulsh saw the bran start and at once crouched beside the straw, which broke the fall of the bran. Workmen in the warehouse went to his assistance and extricated him, none the worse for his experience, but only after they had removed several boards from the building. Ulsh had dislodged the bran, piled fifteen feet high, when he moved the bale of straw.

TOTEM POLES ARE FAMILY HISTORIES

Carved totem poles, the most striking of the objects encountered in Alaskan travels, are emblems of tribes, families or individuals. W. G. Bowdoin, in an article in the *Children's Museum News*, Brooklyn, N. Y., says the family poles stand in front of the home and are often carved in a veritable family history. Other large ones are said to commemorate historical events.

The Alaskans believe themselves descended from animals, each clan from a different beast, which is its token and often appears carved upon the summit of the pole. This beast or bird is reverenced by all members of the clan, protected from harm and death guarded "as a beneficent spirit that watches over them.

FARMER'S PLOW STRIKES A WOMAN OF STONE

What is thought to be a relic of primeval days has been discovered on the farm of Judge John W. Goldsberry, Chillicothe, Ohio, by the tenant, Jacob Ott.

Ott was plowing a field when his plow struck something hard and unearthed a strangely shaped piece of red clay stone. On closer investigation Ott found that the rock was a crude sculpture of a perfectly formed woman. The head of the figure was missing, but otherwise the carving was in a good state of preservation. The body of the figure is carved in bas-relief on a flat rectangular stone, but the legs are completely carved out. The hands, feet and arms are plainly visible.

The opinion is that the figure is an idol of some ancient tribe, formerly inhabitants of this section.

OUR FIRST CLASH WITH AUSTRIA

The first serious difficulty between the United States and Austria arose sixty-five years ago as a result of the Koszta incident, which strained relations between the two countries almost to the breaking point. Martin Koszta, a Hungarian patriot, after taking part in the uprisings of 1848 and subsequent years, came to America and declared his intention of becoming a citizen. In 1853, while on a visit to Smyrna, he was seized and imprisoned on board an Austrian war-vessel. He had with him an American passport, and claimed the protection of the United States warship St. Louis, then in the harbor of Smyrna. Captain Ingraham demanded that Koszta be released, but he was not freed until after the decks of the St. Louis had been cleared for action.

WOMAN CHAMPION MAKER OF FLIES

The title of world's champion artificial fly maker is proudly claimed for Miss Alice Sherwin Coleman of New York, who for more than a decade has been making flies for anglers. Some idea of her reputation among the disciples of Izaak Walton may be gathered from the fact that she and her assistants make $400,000 worth of flies for fishing enthusiasts every year.

Miss Coleman, according to the Chicago Herald, makes 300 different varieties of flies regularly summer and winter, special orders bringing the number up to 1,500 varieties altogether; for such is Miss Coleman's reputation that exacting fishermen in the wilds of America sometimes catch strange flies that hover over particular streams and send them alive in a ventilated bottle so that she may study and reproduce them accurately.

PAIN RESUSCITATES ELECTRIC SHOCK VICTIMS

To the uninitiated, the treatment which a workman suffering from an electric shock receives at the hands of his co-workers is inhuman and brutal, says *Popular Science Monthly*. When a lineman, for instance, stringing primary wires has received a shock which caused him to lose his balance and fall to the ground apparently lifeless, the first thing his working mates do is to take firm hold of the ankles of the limp body, raise it until the entire weight rests upon the back of the neck and then let it drop again. Next they will take a pair of connectors or any other heavy object and hammer the soles of the victim's feet without removing the shoes. While this is being done another comrade will pry open the mouth and yank forward the tongue, which is invariably swallowed in electric shock. By this time, unless the man was instantly killed, he has recovered consciousness, the successive shocks of pain having in some way counterbalanced the effects of the electricity.

FAILURE OF THE U-BOATS

Just before the Germans started their submarine campaign, the German Admiralty boasted that 1,000,000 tons of shipping would be sunk every month. They had the date for the final wiping out of the British mercantile marine and the collapse of the British Empire figured out almost to the month. They started off with total sinkings of over 890,000 tons for April, and thereafter there was a slow but steady decline in losses. During last winter they sank an average of 400,000 tons of shipping per month; but the shrinkage in losses still proceeds, and during April of this year only 220,709 tons of British and 84,398 tons of neutral and allied shipping were sunk, making a total of 305,102 tons. To complete the picture there comes the blocking of Ostend and Zeebrugge and the closing of the North Sea by a mine field.

FALL OF MAXIMILIAN'S MEXICAN EMPIRE

Perhaps the most spectacular event in the long and troubled history of Mexico was the entrance into the capital on a June day fifty-four years ago of Maximilian of Austria and his beautiful wife, the Belgian Princess Charlotte. Surrounded by brilliantly uniformed troops of many nations, they were received with wild enthusiasm and the Hapsburg Prince, a brother of the Emperor Francis Joseph, was crowned Emperor of Mexico. Against the advice of his brother, Maximilian had yielded to the pleas of a group of Mexican exiles and to pressure from Napoleon III. to set up an empire in democratic America.

In spite of the cheers of the population of Mexico City, things went badly from the star. The Indian patriot, Benito Juarez, continued his struggle for liberty and eventually Maximilian was urged to abdicate, but refused to desert his followers, even when Napoleon withdrew from Mexico. He abandoned the capital for Queretaro, where he was arrested, tried by court-martial and executed on June 19, 1867. His body lies in the imperial vault in Vienna.

SERVANTS IN PARIS HAVE GOLDEN DAYS

Paris may be said to be to-day a servants' Eldorado. One would have thought with the thousands of women left in the metropolis to carry on the work of the men at the front it wouldn't be so difficult to find plenty of domestic help. The wages of domestic servants are quite as attractive as munition factory pay.

The most incompetent general servant can demand as much as $25 a month, without even so much as a blush. A capable general cook, and what the French call a *bonne a tout faire*, has no difficulty in obtaining even $40 or $50. This, considering the tremendously great cost of food and fuel, is a very princely wage.

All classes or servants are demanding more "time off," a thing which a French mistress doesn't readily understand. The good old custom of searching references and investigations of servants before hiring them seems to be gradually disappearing. A servant to-day is a servant, whether she carries a reference or not.

THE COST OF STYLE VS. SHOE LEATHER

When the shoe clerk of the present day says "Madam, these shoes are worth their weight in gold," he actually is not very far off. A shoe manufacturer in Lynn, Mass., recently made an interesting experiment, says the *Illustrated World*. He put onto a scale one dollar's worth of a certain grade of fine shoe leather. He put onto the other scale one silver dollar. The weight was the same in each case. So at the present time a good piece of leather is actually worth its weight in silver, and any commodity which is worth its weight in coined silver (which is to say about a third more than plain bullion silver in the bar) is not to be called cheap.

Of course, when we buy a pair of shoes for $10 we cannot say that there is actually ten dollars' worth of leather in them, because "style" value is at the present time of such importance. It is safe to say, however, that soon this extreme style value will diminish a little, because when people finally realize the full value of leather itself there will be plenty economically minded who are willing to buy shoes on their merits as footwear and for service alone.

CONVICTS AT WORK OUTSIDE PRISON WALL

Through the personal efforts of Peter Norbeck, governor of South Dakota, a number of the convicts in the Sioux Falls Penitentiary are being given useful employment outside the prison walls.

A number of the more trustworthy prisoners have been sent across the State to the Black Hills, where their services are being utilized in beautifying a State game preserve which is situated in the most romantic and most picturesque portion of the Black Hills.

The convicts are temporarily given their freedom for this work of honor, and thus far none of them has given the least sign that the conditions of the semi-liberty will be violated. The convicts are being employed in the construction of roads through the game preserve and in the erection of buildings and the making of other improvements in the preserve. Plans for the improvements were made in advance of the commencement of the work, the intention being to make the State game preserve one of the finest parks in the West. The automobile roads and other highways through the preserve will be among the best in South Dakota and adjoining States.

ORIGIN OF CEREALS AND BREAD UNKNOWN

The origin of wheat is lost in hoary antiquity. Even the original home of the cereal plants of which bread is being made is not known, all the researches and hypotheses notwithstanding. Where wheat, spelt, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, etc., first offered man their grainy ears for food is an unsolved problem.

But that originally bread was not roasted or baked, as moderns prepare it, but eaten as dough or paste, may be inferred from its relation with the word "broth," both of these words being derived from the root "breowan," "bru," to brew. In all probability it was originally the boiled coarse meal with nothing added to it but salt. The leavening and baking of the bread was a later development. The origin of these processes is a matter of speculation; but so much is certain: that baking preceded the leavening of the bread that causes it to rise; also that the original form of the bread was not the loaf, but a kind of thin, flat cake like the matzoths, or unleavened bread of the Jews, or the tortillas of the Mexicans. Like these, it was probably roasted upon intensely heated flat stones.

With the discovery of the leaven the flat cake increased in height until it assumed the form of our loaf.

ELECTRICITY THE VICTOR.

The Bear River, which runs through Idaho and Utah, carries a very large flow at an exceedingly rapid rate —for a river. At one point in Idaho no less than six great power houses have been installed on that river, producing a total of nearly 200,000 horse-power. In order to secure good headway, and the force which this gives, two enormous pipe lines have been built to take the water from upper reaches of the river, and, while holding that pipe almost to a level, run it across country to a lower reach, where a power-house is built, thus increasing the headway from nothing to two or three hundred feet.

One of the lines is of eleven-foot pipe, nearly five miles long, says St. Nicholas; the other is a sixteen-foot pipe, half a mile long. Almost all of the current produced at these plants is transmitted by cable to Salt Lake City, 135 miles away.

It has been said by expert engineers of electrical development that it will be but a short time before the intermountain region will use no coal, that all smokestacks and chimneys will be abolished and electricity furnish all the power, heat, and light not only to cities and towns, but to farming communities."

ONLY STANDARDIZED CLOTH TO BE IMPORTED

Cloth for overcoats and suits is being standardized so rapidly in England and Scotland that American dealers are finding great difficulty in having orders filled for goods to which their patrons are accustomed.

U. S. Consul F. D. Hale reports from Huddersfield to the Department of Commerce that "arrangements have already been entered into between the government agents and Scottish manufacturers for the production of 600,000 yards of overcoatings. The weight is to be twenty-four ounces and the patterns will include three grays, three twills and three herring-bones. Patterns already made indicate that these cloths will be good looking and serviceable.

"It is expected that before long twelve additional patterns will be made for the manufacture of Saxony wools, while the production of worsteds under the scheme is to be considered soon. The latter will command higher prices than those established for the present output.

"It is reported that 4,000,000 yards of this standard cloth have been ordered, and if the plan to use Saxony wool is perfected it will mean another million yards. As now planned, provision is made for 750,000 to 1,000,000 suits ready for delivery from June to August next.

NELSON'S FLAGSHIP STILL AFLOAT

H. M. S. *Victory*, Nelson's flagship in the memorable Battle of Trafalgar, has been kept in a fine state of preservation at Portsmouth, and is perhaps the oldest seaworthy vessel in existence. She was launched at Chatham Dockyards in 1765.

Nelson served under Jervis on the *Victory* when that gallant ship lived up to its name off Cape St. Vincent in 1797. On that occasion Sir John Jervis, in command of fifteen sail, defeated the Spanish fleet of twenty-seven ships of the line. For this victory Sir John was raised to the peerage as Earl St. Vincent, and Nelson, his able lieutenant, was knighted and made a Rear-Admiral.

It was from the *Victory* that Nelson directed the formation of the English fleet's battle line off Cape Trafalgar, Spain, in 1805, when he was opposed by the combined fleets of France and Spain. It was from her quarter-deck that he sent his last signal, "England expects every man to do his duty," shortly before he fell mortally wounded.

England has preserved several other ancient men-of-war, including H. M. S. *Implacable*, which was built in France in 1801, and up to a few years ago was serving as a training ship for boys at Falmouth. Another historic ship is the *Caledonia*, which was launched 114 years ago. Perhaps the oldest of American fighting ships are the frigate *Constitution* and the U. S. S. *Constellation*, both built in 1797, the former at Boston and the latter at Baltimore.

THE HISTORY OF KNITTING

In 1551 the first knitting needles, coarse wire things, appeared in England. Some say they were introduced from Spain, others from Scotland. Queen Elizabeth wore the first pair of stockings ever knitted, according to Hume.

The first knitting machine was invented by one William Lee, of Woodborough, England. He worked on this invention three years, spurred on by the refusal of the girl he loved to look or speak to him because she was too absorbed in her knitting. He vowed to make a machine that would take the needles from her hand. At last he evolved a flat frame, the web being flat when the stocking was completed, making it necessary to seam the finished product by hand. Lee died penniless in France, and the girl married another man, but his knitting frame was used almost without change until 1831, when Timothy Bailey, of Albany, N. Y., applied power to it. Previously all knitting had been done by hand. The flat web remained in use until 1850, when J. B. Aikin, of Buffalo, invented a machine that turned out the stocking round. He was so pleased with his invention, which at once revolutionized the factory products, that he went further, and invented a machine for doing the family knitting at home.

In a circular he issued at that date he said: "My family machine will make it possible for the housewife to do all her own knitting and earn a little money knitting for her neighbors. It will knit gents' underwear, gents' cravats, gents' suspenders, ladies' opera capes, tidies, sontags, shawls, nubian scarfs, and rigolets. Grandmother's occupation is gone with one of my machines in the house."

DIAMOND FIELDS OF DUTCH BORNEO

Interested persons in Holland are directing attention to the diamond fields of Dutch Borneo, which, while known of for centuries, have never been developed, notwithstanding the Netherlands has in Amsterdam the greatest diamond-cutting industry in the world.

Interest in this subject has been aroused most particularly by reports that diamond mills are to be established at Birmingham, England, as soon as the war ends, and that British (African) rough diamonds (on which the Amsterdam industry is now entirely dependent) are to be diverted to their use. This is construed to mean that the Dutch mills can have only such British rough diamonds as may remain after the British mills are supplied. Apparent confirmation is found in quotations from alleged official British statements that crippled soldiers are already learning diamond cutting, and that in a short time a body of fully 2,000 diamond workers will be formed in England (a fifth of the number in Amsterdam, of whom nearly a third are now unemployed). It is supposed that refugee diamond workers from Antwerp will form the nucleus of this body.

These reports create concern sufficient to induce an appeal to the Dutch government in regard to the undeveloped Borneo diamond mines. In fact, it is stated that two years ago the government was urged to take action in this matter, and that it promised to do so. What action has been taken is not yet announced. No details of the possibilities in Borneo are made public, if known, except the statement of the most experienced man in the Amsterdam diamond industry that energetic development of the Borneo fields would yield important quantities of diamonds. Holland is now wholly dependent upon the British diamond mines.

DRAFTED MEN HAVE CHANCE FOR COMMISSIONS

What chance has a drafted man for a commission? The very best. In so far as a military establishment can be, the American Army is a democratic institution. From the day the rookies arrive at camp they are carefully watched to see which of them appear to be "officer" material. The first promotions come quickly; out of every eight new men one must be chosen as corporal, besides which sergeants have to be selected. The right men must be picked, for upon them depends the efficiency of the company.

The weeks pass, raw recruits are transformed into soldiers, and the more ambitious have devoted their spare time to study. Before the training camp period ends those showing the greatest aptitude are recommended for commissions. There is a ceaseless demand for officers for the new quotas called to the colors. In France many officers must be detailed for special work, so another reorganization takes place.

Finally the regiment takes its place on the firing line, where commissions may be won almost overnight. The places of disabled officers and those who made the great sacrifice must be filled, although it should be said that the officer runs slightly less risk of injury or capture than the privates. Vacancies are filled from the ranks, usually on recommendation of the company or regimental commander, and commissions are often given to men who, in the fiery test of battle, have shown marked courage and capacity for leadership. Sometimes the candidate goes to a camp for two weeks' training, but he may receive his shoulder straps without delay.

In 1914 one of the rawest recruits in Canada's famous regiment, "The Princess Pats," was "Hughie" Niven. Recently he was serving as acting brigadier-general. Arthur Cleasby Waters enlisted for the war as private in the London Regiment; he is now colonel and wears the Victoria Cross. A Cleveland boy, called in the first draft, mentioned to his sergeant that he had spent four years in France and was familiar with the Verdun region. He also remarked that he spoke four languages besides English. To-day he holds a commission on the staff of General Pershing.

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"It took me only a few hours to learn the principles of K. I. Shorthand. Your system is, indeed, very simple and easy to learn."—L. MCFARLAND, Merchants' and Planters' Bank, Arkadelphia.

"K. I. Shorthand is fascinating; the more I study it the better I like it; so plain and easy to understand." (This is part of a long letter written to us in K. I. Shorthand.)—H. F. GOODWIN, 160 **Princess St., St. John, Can.**

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A stenographer uses K. I. Shorthand for taking employer's dictation of **letters, documents, reports, memoranda,** etc. Good pay. *Healthy, improving occupation.*

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1.—The young woman received the K. I. Shorthand System. 2.—She is learning easily and pleasantly. 3.—Surprises her employer by telling him she knows shorthand. 4.—Taking dictation. 5.—Increase in her pay envelope. 6.—Is now able to dress better and save more money. Her whole career improved.

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One Tenth the Time in Learning
GUARANTEED 100% VALUE

It is absolutely true that the eminent KING INSTITUTE (incorporated; $100,000 authorized capital) is offering the complete Course of Instruction in K. I. Shorthand at the astonishingly low charge of five dollars. Relatively, this tuition is worth fifty dollars, and even that sum would be cheaper and more advantageous to you than many systems that are being taught. Why? Because Shorthand is practical and is so quickly learned.

You need send only one dollar now if you agree to pay the rest—four dollars—when you receive ten lessons (Course of Instruction), after which the remaining instruction will be given to you, by mail, without any further charge.

No matter how young or how old you are, if you can learn the specimen lesson above, you should have no difficulty whatsoever in becoming proficient in the simplified K. I. SHORTHAND.

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In some localities it is the law that a person must learn engineering before he is allowed to run an automobile. Yet, thousands of persons who never took a long course of engineering have learned within a few hours how to run an auto. Apply this comparison to the difference between learning the complications of an old system of shorthand when you can do just as well, for all practical purposes, by the simplified K. I. Shorthand

On the next page is an Enrollment Coupon that you may fill out and send to King Institute, Inc., with either $5.00 or $1.00; or you may request the Brochure which gives further information. Do not let this opportunity pass by. It is likely to mean a complete change in your career—untold contentment.

Learn K. I. Shorthand in Five Evenings

"I found every lesson simple, and easily learned. I am proud to tell you this."—ELISE DAVIDSON, R. D. 2, Fortson, Ga.

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Legions of persons, both sexes, all ages, praise the remarkable simplified K. I. Shorthand.

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Your name will be enrolled and you will become entitled to all privileges of tuition until you have fully learned.

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This announcement may not appear again until we increase our price so do not overlook this grand opportunity. Send that dollar NOW. Cut out this advertisement and show to others. We will send a booklet free on request.

"Talk as fast as you like. I am taking it down in K. I. Shorthand."

Try These K. I. Shortcuts

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This word takes 34 pen movements in ordinary writing—only 2 in K. I. Shorthand. See how many times you can write it while your friend writes in the usual way.

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Takes 54 movements in longhand; only 3 in K. I. Shorthand. The whole method is surprisingly easy to learn.

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There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine—double strength—from your druggists, and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than one ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful clear complexion.

Be sure to ask for the double strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

HUNTING KNIFE ARE SMITH. Best forged steel, tempered, ground and polished, Bowie point, 4-inch blade; strong metal handle to meet the rugged use of woods or camp. Sheath made of strong leather, with slotted tang to carry on belt. Lone Scouts, this is the biggest bargain you ever saw. Price 35 cents post paid. Catalog Free.

BATES GUN CO., Dept. 5 MELROSE, MASS.

DRINK

If you know some one who drinks whisky, beer, gin or any other **alcoholic** beverages, to his injury, you may obtain **FREE**, a very helpful book by writing to Edw. J. Woods, WP-101, Station F, New York, N. Y. It shows **how to conquer drink habit.**

Send for my book

Strong Arms and Military Shoulders

for 25c, coin or stamps.

Illustrated with twenty full page haiftone cuts, showing exercises that will quickly develop, beautify, and gain great strength in your shoulders, arms and hands, without any apparatus.

Equal to any Mail Course on Strength.

MUSCLE BUILDER

A steel spring exerciser and chest expander with a complete course of twenty-four selected exercises for developing all the muscles of the body. It is equal to any $3.00 exerciser. My price for a short time only $1.00

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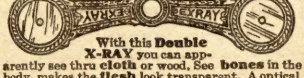

With this Double X-RAY you can apparently see thru cloth or wood. See bones in the body, makes the flesh look transparent. A optical illusion. By mail **10 cts.** three for **25 cts.** Postpaid **Ardee Co.** Box 227 **Stamford Conn.**

SNUFF HABIT

If you are addicted to this pernicious habit, which is causing you nervousness, irritability, headaches, heart weakness and other misery, write to E. J. Woods, WR-101, Station F, New York for information how to overcome the addiction quickly and easily.

Fat Is Fatal

A Burden of Unhealthy Fatness Shortens Life. Reduce Weight Comfortably.

Would you like to reduce your weight ten to sixty pounds in a simple, safe, comfortable way?

Do you want to become healthier, to look younger, to be sprightly, to possess a good figure without wrinkles or flabbiness?

Then stop harmful drugging; do not follow any starvation plan or tedious exercising, but adopt the delightful home method.

Stand by your window or in the open air each morning and evening, taking ten long, deep breaths. Inhale through the nose with the mouth closed; exhale with the mouth open. Take oil of korein four times daily and follow the other simple directions that come with it.

You will positively reduce your weight, or you will receive a forfeiture in cash. Go to the drug store and get some oil of korein to-day, or write Korein Company, NC-101, Station F, New York, N. Y., for free book "Reduce Weight Happily." The guarantee is absolute.

TOBACCO HABIT

Easily Conquered in 3 Days

Picture No. 1—*Shows how tobacco has nearly wrecked a man's career. He has become nervous, dyspeptic and irritable; he cannot sleep well, has lost his energy and ambition.* **No. 2**—*The doctor says: "I'm giving you this medicine but it will do very little good, unless you stop killing yourself with tobacco."* **No. 3**—*Still a slave; another collapse.* **No. 4**—*Wife reads advertisement of Mr. Woods.* **No. 5**—*Writes for Woods' FREE BOOK.* **No. 6**—*Being convinced by multitude of proofs, he as ordered remedy which is in box postman is now delivering.* **No. 7**—*Has begun to overcome tobacco craving. Already is feeling much better; vigor and ambition returning.* **No. 8**—*Surprising improvement; all craving gone, filled with new courage and backed by good health.* **No. 9**—*Beginning anew.* **No. 10**—*Succeeding in business.* **No. 11**—*No trouble to resist temptation of tobacco in any form.* **No. 12**—*By clear-headedness, good health and energy, he has now become prosperous.*

Would You Like to Quit Tobacco Quickly and Easily and Enjoy Yourself a Thousand Times Better While in Robust Health?

STOP RUINING YOUR LIFE

Why continue to commit slow suicide when you can live a really contented life, if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid oneself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will-power"—don't do it. The correct way is to eliminate nicotine poison from the system, and genuinely overcome the craving.

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas belching, gnawing, or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach; constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, heart failure, melancholy, lung trouble, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver, loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and failing out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco, or snuff.

Here is an opportunity to receive FREE a carefully compiled treatise on the subject, containing interesting and valuable information that you should be glad to learn about. This book tells all about the renowned THREE DAYS' METHOD by which thousands and thousands saved themselves from the life-wrecking tobacco habit. Full particulars, including the book on tobacco and snuff habit, will be mailed FREE TO YOU, in plain wrapper, postpaid. All you need do is merely REQUEST IT. A postcard will do. Address

FREE

EDWARD J. WOODS, WH 101, Station F, New York, N. Y.

NOTE.—To those who are injuring their health, making themselves nervous, dyspeptic, etc., by excessive use of cigarettes, cigars, pipe, snuff or chewing tobacco:—here is your opportunity to quickly and easily become your own master.

MAKE MONEY **RAISE GUINEA PIGS** for us. We buy all you raise. Easy to raise—very profitable—big demand, pay better than poultry or squabs. Particulars, contract, booklet how to raise FREE. Write today. CAVIES DISTRIBUTING CO., Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

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Become Slim This Summer

Have you heard about the new system for weight reduction?

You may eat and drink all you need. There is no tedious exercising. Take a little oil of korein at mealtimes and when retiring; also follow the simple, clear directions. A loss of weight, ten to sixty pounds (whatever you need to lose), may be expected by this safe and pleasant system of fat reduction. At the druggist's get a small box of oil of korein capsules, and start at once. Be of normal size, with good figure and attractive appearance, agile, quick-witted, healthier and more efficient. By reducing weight now you are likely to avoid one or more diseases, heart weakness, sunstroke, apoplexy, etc., and to add years to your life.

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To You, Miss or Mrs., About Your Hair

This is a plain talk of real importance to you because it is absolutely honest and the information is genuine.

You have been losing your hair. It comes out on the comb or brush. The steady loss, as well as the fact that you hair is becoming thinner and weaker, is worrying you.

You have tried different lotions, tonics, washes, etc., that were recommended or which you saw advertised. None of these have done you any good. They were not the right remedy for your hair.

Well, dear Madam, here is a message of good cheer. It comes from a man.

Years ago when I was almost entirely bald I came across an old Cherokee Indian who induced me to try his recipe for growing hair. He told me that the principle of this formula was used by all Indians, male and female, wherever they found a weed of it.

You know that Indian women (and men too) have long, beautiful hair.

So I tried the recipe. The compound was an ointment for the scalp. It had a bad odor and was rather nasty. But my hair grew—and has continued to grow. Since then I have never had any trouble with my hair. At the age of 60 I now possess an abundant growth and visit the barber each month to have it cut. Once, after an accident, when I was compelled to remain in the hospital for several weeks, it grew so long that it was like a woman's flourishing hair growth.

The recipe I obtained from the old Indian savant and it has been used by many others. I have had the formula modernized by a practical chemist so that the cosmetic ointment now has a more pleasant odor and is more agreeable to apply to the scalp and base of the hair.

It contains no alcohol nor any of those ingredients which tend to dry the hair, scalp and roots. On the contrary, it is a fertilizing compound. The Indian principle is that it must contain elements from the three natural Kingdoms. This rule is maintained in the recipe.

I want you to try this cosmetic on your scalp. It can be applied when retiring each night, only a few moments being required. It is likely you will find a very satisfactory result, almost from the outset.

Now make no mistake; this is not a lovely scented preparation. There's nothing fancy about it. The name is Kotalko and you shall have the recipe free of cost by writing for it. Your druggist can supply the cosmetic according to the recipe; or you may obtain the compound from me, ready to use. Send me your name and address. The recipe will come free. If you would like a proof box of the cosmetic, enclose 25 cents, silver or stamps. My address is: John Hart Britain, BD-101, 150 East Thirty-second St., New York, N. Y.

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